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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A SEARCH FOR MEANING IN WORK EDUCATION:
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDENT

BY

SARAH CATHERINE HUMENIUK ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
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....
Supervisor

....

Frank Peters
....

Date July 27/89

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving husband, Nick, as a symbol of my whole-hearted appreciation of your giving of yourself to me unstintingly. Thank you for providing:

the freedom to pursue an interest;

a climate of encouragement
and emotional support;

floral morale boosters during the crises;

hours of tedious proofreading and;

a tireless ear for my frustrations
as well as my triumphs.

Thank you for the gift of friendship demonstrated through your devoted concern during my journey on the most recent lap of my career path. The joy of our relationship transcends the pleasure of completing this study.

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study emerged from a concern about the limited interaction that appeared to be evidenced between the student and the school and between the student and the work station in a typical high school work education program. Individual study on various work education programs in North America as well as a pilot study conducted prior to the study herein reported only served to confirm the possibility of a problem. Coupled with the unease regarding interaction was an interest in the career development process and how work education might impact the process.

Although some research on work education existed, it did not take into account underlying meanings that were being experienced by the students at the work stations. To date research uncovered was quantitative and heavily focused on advantages or disadvantages of the program to the student, school and/or the employer.

The information for this study was gleaned from the following sources: tape recorded interviews with student participants; field notes of observations and interviews with supervisors and administrators at the work stations; and journal entries of student participants over a six-month period culminating in follow-up telephone interviews three months later with five student and three supervisor participants. Five case studies of five work education students each in a different work station are herein explicated.

The research is narrated in seven chapters. The focus is a dominant theme of "exploration of self and others" with subthemes of "drowning in the deep end," "doing time in the back room," "becoming a team player," "learning in the driver's seat," "acquiring a sense of achievement," "building relationships," and "perception of role: insider vs. outsider." Although each case is unique in its meanings and work station context, there is a common pattern of meanings.

The most salient subtheme for all five cases was "perception of role: insider vs. outsider." Meanings were mediated by dialogue at the work station and through the research process itself. Students expressed appreciation for the experience of work education but were concerned about lack of dialogue both at the work station and the school.

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Dr. Larry Beauchamp, my understanding, patient and knowledgeable advisor, whose door was always open and whose watchful mentorship greatly facilitated the realization and completion of this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

During my high school teaching days I took an active role in finding jobs for many of my students as well as counselling them in the area of career choice. The need for a program to allow students to "try out" a job in the work place while still going to school seemed to be a worthwhile attempt at making a smooth transition from school to the world of work.

While I was teaching in the junior college of our community, the Work Experience Program was implemented as part of the Alberta Curriculum, and was offered as part of the high school credit program in the local high school. As a small business owner during the years 1974 - 1982, I was involved with this program as a cooperating supervisor at a government-approved work station, which was my place of business. My involvement as an employer rather than as a teacher, only served to reinforce my belief in the usefulness of the program. The high school student appeared to benefit for a variety of reasons, including exploration of a tentative occupational choice.

In the years that followed the sale of my business, I experienced a renewed interest in young people and their career choice process. It seemed that I was hearing from parents as well as their teen-age children about how problematic the career choice process had now become. I became interested in the factors of career choice. When I decided to go back to university, my intent was to do research in the area of career choice.

As a major project in one of my courses, I designed a fairly lengthy survey questionnaire and administered it to four classes: two in each of two high schools. Two of the factors of career choice which seemed to show significant frequency were: part-time employment and school-sponsored work experience. At this point I decided to do research on career choice within the context of the High School Work Experience Program.

All the research articles on career choice that I had read were exclusively quantitative in nature. After reading them I got a sense of wanting to go further. The numerical data only scratched the surface of what the student was really experiencing, I reflected. I began to have serious doubts about wanting to do research. At this point I was not aware of any other research paradigms.

Conducting my own career exploration, I spoke to representatives of four different departments in the Faculty of Education which might be open to me to do my research. In speaking to the Associate Chairman of Secondary Education, I heard about qualitative research for the first time. His explanation of qualitative methods coupled with the reading of an article which examined ethnographic studies in education, encouraged me to pursue my area of interest through research.

The Question

Since I was interested in how the choice of occupation happens through experience in work education, my initial question was, "How does work experience affect vocational choice?" As I continued thinking about the topic, I realized I wanted to clearly define the matter of choice as a developmental process rather than an instant in time. Furthermore I wanted to clearly delineate the concept of work experience occuring as part of the high school educational program, rather than the broader concept of experience in employment outside of school supervision.

The question became, "How is the experience of work education impacting the participant's process of career development? "Work education" is used rather than "work experience" to prevent awkward sentence structure since the word "experience" would often be used as an operative word in conjunction with the program. Through the process of gathering data, the question was once more revised to read, "How is the participant ascribing meanings to the experiences of work education while engaging in the process of career development?

Definition of Terms

Career Choice

Selection of occupational and educational experiences in which one chooses to engage.

Career Development

The life-long process of developing work values, vocational identity, learning about opportunities, trying out plans in part-time, recreational, and full-time work situations after consideration of constraints and individual value orientation.

Career Exploration

Actively engaging in "trying out" activities towards an understanding of educational and occupational alternatives as well as comparing these understandings to the understanding of self.

Work Center

Location within the work station assigned by the administrator or supervisor to the work education participant for the purpose of performing allocated duties.

Work Experience, Work Education, Experiential Education, Experience-Based Career Education, and Cooperative Education

These programs all vary somewhat in their structure, but for purposes of this study all are synonymous. All these programs originate in the secondary schools and provide a link from the school to the world of work whereby the participant's education is provided by a community resource other than the school but supervised by the school.

Work Station

A business or institution approved by the school, school board, and department of education, to provide educational activities for students for a set number of hours, and to evaluate that student's performance.

Work Station Supervisor

The person designated by the work station to take the responsibility for the participant student's educational activities and evaluation of performance.

Work Experience Coordinator

The person who is designated by the school to accept students into the program; place them at work stations; supervise the educational activities at the work stations; and provide a report to both the school and the Department of Education at the end of each school year.

Work Station Administrator

The person who is empowered to sign the contractual obligation with the school to provide educational experiences for a designated student.

Significance

A limited degree of interaction takes place between work station supervisors and work experience coordinators; between work experience coordinators and participant students; and between work station administrators and students.. Students enter the program either through their own volition or through very limited advice of school personnel.

Students are placed with a work station supervisor at a work station which may be a business or an institution. The school then sends home a brief form asking for signed permission to allow the student to participate. For the entire 125 hours that constitute five credits in Work Experience 15, 25, or 35, the school transfers teaching responsibility to the work station. Typically, this responsibility is mediated by one telephone call and one visit to the work site by the coordinator.

In practice, most participant students do not interact with the work experience coordinator within that 125 hours except for instances where they wish to change to another work station. At the end of the required time, usually the student comes in to the work experience coordinator's office to pick up his or her evaluation or to get his or her final mark.

I believe that the limited interaction just described adversely affects what each person involved in the work experience program understands about the program itself and the student's understanding within the program. Work Experience, according to the Alberta Curriculum, has six main objectives for the students.

One of these is to enable the student to explore career opportunities.

I hope to uncover the unstated, underlying meanings of the experience of the participant at the work station through the lens of the career choice process. Administrators, work experience coordinators, work station supervisors, and parents all need to come to a greater understanding of the meaning of the experience of work education in the context of the work station.

The study herein reported is significant in that it represents an addition to a field (work education) sadly lacking in studies; as far as is known it is a first in ethnographic studies of students in the context of the work station; and furthermore, a beginning in presenting data in a readable form with a view to reaching a larger audience.

Delimitations

Although a myriad of factors have been identified in the literature as affecting career development, only the context of work education is being examined here.

Other objectives have been defined by the curriculum guide, and factors of why students take work education are identified in the literature. I will look through the magnifying scope of career development as it relates to planned work education.

Students will identify positive and problematic areas in career development through the context of the work station. Implications for educators as they relate to students and work station supervisors will be drawn. Any implementation to the work education program of these implications will be left to the discretion of the reader.

In choosing to study five students in depth, I am not attempting to achieve any generalizable results. Rather I will seek, through thorough description, analysis, and reflection, to allow the reader to perceive any similarities of the cases presented to those with which the reader has familiarity.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHOD

Individual Study

My first step in coming to a decision on a research question was to gather as much information as possible regarding high school work education programs in North America with a special emphasis on those in Canada. Furthermore, I embarked on what I thought would be a very comprehensive reading program of the literature on work education in the high schools.

I expected to find an abundance of articles on the subject. After weeks of diligent searching with considerable aid from Education Library Staff, I discovered much to my chagrin, that neither the term "work experience" nor "work education" was a bonafide descriptor in most directories. Furthermore, when either term was a descriptor, the articles related to experience in the world of paid work more often than they referred to planned work experience as an educational component of a school.

More searching uncovered a host of descriptors that bore some relation to what I was looking for: programs that arranged experience in work situations for students of high schools. Although there was no journal of work experience, there was a Journal of Cooperative Education. Alas, the articles in it were almost exclusively about programs delivered by colleges or universities, not high schools. The descriptors under which I eventually searched for articles were: Cooperative Education, Experiential Education, and Vocational Choice, as well as Work Experience. Nevertheless, the task proved to be an onerous one. Trying to determine from the title whether the article might be valuable to my quest appeared to be an impossible task. At times I gleaned information from only a precious few articles, even though I had searched and read twenty or thirty.

The frustration of trying to locate information in the literature was only balanced by the realization that my general topic of research interest was not, after all, a very popular one. I consoled myself in the belief that I would probably be "breaking new ground" in this field, or at the least adding to a miniscule body of research.

So intense was my search, that when I found the study that remains the most relevant to my own study to this day, I ran to the Education Library Service Counter and proclaimed my discovery loudly and jubilantly. Other students looked up from their pensive poses, probably wondering if I was just another student "burnout" statistic. I had discovered the results of a massive case study (Twarog, 1979) of experiential education programs in four different schools conducted in what was termed as the "anthropological approach."

In trying to get information on programs and also on how they are implemented, I wrote to all the Departments of Education in Canada. I discovered that there was a lack of uniformity in naming a program for experience in the world of work as well as in the organization of it throughout Canada.

Even in Alberta I discovered that although the Department name for work education ~~was~~ "work experience," the consultant at one of the largest school boards in the province was called the "Cooperative Education Consultant." In Canada an association of teachers and administrators involved in delivering programs that link school and work, is called the Cooperative Education Council. Members of this council could, however, be employed by post-secondary institutions or government agencies as well as high schools.

Sorting out the information as it came in, proved an onerous task, until I invested in a few telephone calls. After clarifying some of the data, I began to form a clearer picture of this elusive beast, "work education."

Trying to find information from United States Departments of Education proved even more difficult. I had assumed that finding a list of all the Work Experience Divisions in the various Divisions of Education in the State Departments would be as simple as looking up the meaning of a common word in the dictionary. A telephone call to a State Department in Oregon revealed that there were 26 associations in the United States that dealt with the varied areas of experiential education. Some of the associations only had members from the post-secondary levels, others had members from both levels. The person I spoke to mailed the complete list to me. Now I was able to access all those associations.

The information I received was gargantuan! If I thought the variance in programs in Canada was great, I was completely astounded at the variety in the American specialization and the naming of the programs that in some way brought the student and the world of work together for a short term. No more could I use "unpaid work" as part of my definition of participation in work education. In Southern

California, at any rate, students received high school credits as well as the minimum hourly wage.

The differences in the programs seemed much greater than the similarities. In fact, there was only one similarity in all of them: they were initiated by the schools, and provided on-site attendance in a work place. Even the matter of credits was not universal. Some programs did not offer school credit, particularly if their main thrust was vocational exploration.

After my experience in sorting out all the information on experiential education (a global rubric I finally chose), I abandoned any idea of taking a survey through administering a questionnaire to a number of high schools in Canada making sure there was a representative sample of each program. Now I was determined to focus on "work education" as it was being delivered in Alberta and to study some aspect of it in a few large city schools.

Pilot Project

Selection of Sites

Initially I contacted a cooperative education consultant of a large school board to get a list of high schools and work experience coordinators. Additional information such as time allotment to work education (part-time or full-time), and length of time in the position aided me in deciding which people I should contact. After a few phone calls, I obtained permission to conduct a pilot project at two high schools. Two weeks of half days were spent in each of the two schools.

Learning about the Program

The first school had one full-time coordinator and one half-time coordinator. Since the full-time coordinator was the most experienced of all the coordinators in that particular school system, I chose to interview him at length to find out more about the program. For one week I shadowed him, listening to his dialogue with students, as well as going on visits to work stations. Although he tried to arrange an on-site observation for me, none was open to me for the times that I was available to visit.

The Subjects

Students interviewed were either in grade eleven or twelve and were taking work education, or had taken it previously. In the first and second school all students interviewed were in variations of a diploma program for high school graduation; in the third school (Champion) all students were enrolled in the advanced diploma program, successful completion of which would give them university entrance or a variety of other post-secondary programs.

Interviews Within the School

Interviews were set up for me during the second week at the first school with six students, of varying frequency of participation (one round, two rounds, and three rounds) of work education. I chose one student to interview for a second time and to do an observation of him at his work station, which was the school cafeteria. All interviews were tape-recorded and data transcribed.

In the second school, I had the privilege of speaking with a seasoned coordinator who was on the point of retirement. Six more interviews were set up with six different students. To date I had not interviewed even one student in the advanced diploma program which would provide university and college entrance. In both schools, the typical student in the program seemed to be interested in taking work education for credit or to get a job immediately after high school graduation. I was trying to find a student who was taking work education for the express purpose of career exploration towards future educational as well as occupational choices. Could it be that such a person did not exist?

Discouraged, but nevertheless determined to find that student or students, I called the school board consultant once more, explaining my dilemma. She then suggested that I contact Champion High School where I might find some work education students taking the advanced diploma program. I was not interested in explicating the typical: rather, I wanted to find the unique; subjects not ordinarily identified with work education. A call to Mrs. Durant was encouraging. Yes, she thought there were some students at her school that were exploring a career through work education.

At the third school I spent another two weeks, once more interviewing six students of varying experience and varying work stations. I chose one student for a second interview. This particular student was an International Baccalaureate student. I was later informed that he had the highest I. Q. recorded of any student attending the school at that time. In fact all the students interviewed at this school were in the advanced diploma program with the intention of getting further training towards an occupational choice.

Problems of Access to the Work Stations

At the first school there was a problem in finding a time suitable to both the work station and my own timetable, since I was also attending university classes. At the second school, the coordinator received verbal approval from one station. Once the supervisor knew my identity, she seemed reluctant to let me come, using a variety of excuses each of the three times I called to set up an appointment. Later I discovered that being known in this situation was a disadvantage. There might have been a perception that I would somehow steal some trade secrets, especially since my husband had a business in a competing line of services.

At the third school, the coordinator tried once more for access to a work station. She seemed to gain permission on the first try, even though the other coordinators had called many work stations without success. The work station accessed was a travel agency, a context very well known to me. I had owned and operated a travel agency for a number of years. I was delighted, thinking it would be easier for me to do the participant-observing in a familiar setting. When I discovered that the manager of the agency knew of me and my agency, I froze, thinking that "being known" would once more present an impediment. Fortunately, the opposite was true. The travel agency was not very busy at the times that I observed on three different days. This meant that the manager and the agents had time to chat with me and make the observation much more tolerable.

Transcription and Analysis

I attempted to transcribe of the taped student interviews, but found that two of the interviews were not available to me. The sound of one was highly distorted; another was simply not there after the first few minutes (I had stopped the machine, adjusted the volume and forgot to start it again.) Experience of this nature in the pilot proved good "practice" for the study itself. I learned to be diligent in checking and double-checking that all was well.

Field notes were written immediately following each interview. An attempt was made to analyze and codify units of meaning from the data. I proposed the following themes: career exploration; achievement and responsibility; good contacts and references; and interpersonal relations. It seemed to me that I was not getting at deeper underlying meanings. My advisor, however, assured me that in my research study where I would be spending more time with each student and over a longer period of time, getting at the meanings would eventually become possible.

Towards a Research Orientation

Multi-Site Case Study

Experience in the pilot study seemed to guide me towards studying a particular student or students, instead of studying a program. I had read articles on case studies but the case was usually a group within a population or a program of studies. Thinking of a student as a case was a new perspective for me. The scope of the program lent itself to a diversity of experience for a variety of reasons: the number and type of work stations; the reasons students engaged in work education; and the biographies of the students themselves. Therefore, it seemed appropriate for me to study more than one case and explicate both the uniqueness as well as the common patterns that emerge.

Stake (1988) explains the use of the case method when the search is for understanding of the idiosyncrasy of a particular case in complexity. I was relieved to find that "even in the most unique of persons there are certain patterns." Stake further advocates enhancing credibility of the study by confirming accuracy of observations through interviews. The case study does not deal with totality of anything: in other words I am not seeking to give an account of all that happens to an individual in work education. Rather Stake (1988) says it deals with the unity of the case, the unity of the experience, in ways other research methods do not. I began to see my task as one of explicating the uniqueness of meanings in each particular case against each particular context; but also to find common patterns even through the diversities.

I wished to focus on the student as he or she experiences work education at the work station, and come to a better understanding of that experience, in its uniqueness as well as its complexity. I chose the case study as a framework or as Stake (1988) terms it, a "bounded system."

Qualitative/Ethnographic Process

Stake (1988) as well as other writers in the field are quick to point out that a case study is not necessarily researched in an ethnographic mode.

Although most case studies use qualitative methods, some case study researchers use quantitative methods.

Jax (1984) contends that a research question for an interpretive scientist arises when there is a need for an experientially meaningful, or authentically human understanding of some aspect of the interactive cultural system. The focus is to understand how those being studied interpret and give meaning to their situation, and to uncover aspects of social reality through dialogue and produce typifying examples of social phenomena and events. Ethnography provides a means to interpret human experience. Research within this perspective attempts to clarify, authenticate, and uncover meaning embedded in the forces of the cultural process.

An ethnographic process appeared to be applicable to my question which was focusing on the meanings ascribed by students to their experiences at the work station.

The strength of ethnographic fieldwork and its validity lies in its "triangulation" or the obtaining of information in many ways rather than just one. My research design incorporated the use of a variety of information gathering strategies including cross-checking; participant observation at the work station; interviewing student participants three times over the period of the time at the work station; interviewing the administrator at the work station; and interviewing the supervisor directly responsible for the student's activities; followed by a telephone follow-up interview to supervisors and students a few months after the completion of the former information gathering, to cross-check any remaining puzzlements.

The participant observer stance is the one I adopted since I wanted to become immersed in the activities of the station in order to more fully understand. As a participant observer, I would talk to employees as well as the supervisor at the work station, and observe their activities, jotting down a few salient facts, but not recording the field notes of the observation until I had left the setting. Inferences may be drawn from the way people act, from what people say, and from the artifacts people use.

The ethnographer tries to make the familiar strange or asks questions as to why something exists as it does; looks at the relationship between the setting and its context as a basis of understanding why events occur as they do; begins research with only the thought of a problem, not predetermined hypotheses.

Jax (1984) stated that the ethnographic interview is used to gain understanding from an informant's perception. Key open-ended questions are used to guide the direction. Although there may be an interview guide, much of the interview evolves as it happens. Tape-recording the interview and transcribing it brings it into focus for analysis. Data analysis happens on a continuous basis, pulling out from field notes, a key incident, and linking it to other incidents. Through data analysis, categories emerge that can be linked in order to provide knowledge.

An ethnographic report is written in a descriptive style, reflecting the notion of thick description. Quotes and lengthy descriptions of settings and interactions are included to validate the ethnographer's interpretation of data.

Situational-Interpretive Paradigm

A paradigm is a framework for determining what will be accepted as an explanation; provides a perspective from which reality is defined, interpreted, and acted upon; presents an orientation for the individual's relationship with the world, a "world view."

The Situational Interpretive inquiry was chosen as a suitable orientation to the understanding desired in this study. This orientation views a human being as a social being possessing intentionality, leading to action and giving personal meanings to situations by interpreting events around himself or herself. He or she is influencing, and being influenced by his or her surroundings. Each individual gives meaning to his or her particular situation, and these meanings may vary from one individual to another according to their interpretations. The activity of concern herein according to Aoki (1980) is communication between human beings. The focus is subjective experience of life. The meaning of events and activities are explicated in order to gain insights into human experience. Reality is dependent on biographical features of an individual as well as his or her interpretations of events.

Design of the Study

Since only one student can participate in a typical work station setting at one time according to Department of Education restrictions, the use of a multi-site case study design seemed appropriate. Each work education time-line is typically 125 hours for a total of five high school credits; however, some students choose 75 hours of participation for which three credits are granted.

To provide more time to set up interviews, get access for observation, and allow the student time to develop perceptions, I decided to choose only those students enrolled for 125 hours. Students can organize the required hours to suit their school timetable as well as their work station requirements. I needed to follow students who would be spreading their work education hours over at least three to four months. Adequate time was needed in order to allow myself time to access each of them at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the experience; as well as engaging in participant observation, and completing the administrator and supervisor interviews. Six students and six stations would be chosen.

Conducting the Study

Selection of Participants

I was particularly interested in studying those students engaged in work education for the express purpose of trying out an occupational choice for which post-secondary training was required. Selection of school where I was likely to find the desired population had been accomplished through the pilot study. The last school in the pilot study, Champion High School, with the same coordinator, Mrs. Durant, would be my originating point. Selecting work station sites that would admit access was more problematic, and would have to be accomplished as students registered for the program and received their work station assignments.

This was Mrs. Durant's second year as a work experience coordinator. She was scheduling, for the first time, two orientation sessions for the work education participants at the beginning of the school year. The program has a continuous intake during the school year, quite different from other school-based classes. It would be impossible to see, at any one time, all the students who would be enrolled in work education that semester. As it happened, there was precious little time in the orientation sessions for all that Mrs. Durant wished to accomplish, yet she offered me a few minutes to explain my research and to ask for volunteers. I did what I could in explaining the nature of the research, but found that very few students put their hands up to indicate they wanted the information sheet (Appendix A) and questionnaire (Appendix B). That first session gleaned only three students. I had been hoping for twenty or more from which to choose twelve initial interviewees. In the second session only two more joined our volunteer hopefuls. It became apparent that the mode of selection needed to be changed. Mrs. Durant chose another seven participants. She did so as they came in individually to her office seeking entrance to the program. Occasionally she asked someone who chose not to be involved, but most did. Now I had twelve participants. All twelve filled out the original questionnaire. Before she accomplished the selection, we talked about what kind of subject I wished to interview. My preference was for students who were articulate and willing to spend the time involved to complete the study, and whose express purpose in work education participation was career exploration. I hoped the selection would include both males and females, and a few participants who were taking part in a second round of work education.

Throughout the study, I was particularly fortunate with the cooperation and help that I received from the work experience coordinator at the school. Despite her busy schedule, she always took time to speak with me, and to encourage me, even if only for a few minutes.

Timing was of the essence. When a student had been chosen, the work station was also assigned. Within a few days the student could start participating at the work station. My design called for interviewing the initial twelve students before they started participating. Now I had no time to waste.

Interviewing

I contacted all the students by telephone and set up interviews in rapid succession in order to make sure they occurred before students took part in work education. The initial interviews were held at the school and lasted for 45 minutes. All were tape-recorded except for one because the participant informed me she was dropping work education. All the interviewees had been accepted by their work station for participation at the time of the interview.

As it happened, however, one student had already decided she wanted a different station as a result of the interview; another student had gone ahead and started participating in the station since she had no classes that semester; still another student was experiencing a clash of schedules between work education and extracurricular school activities and was uncertain whether she would stay in work education. So, during the initial twelve interview contacts, three had already been eliminated from continuing in the study.

Out of the nine remaining, I was hoping for six students whose work station supervisors would also allow the research to happen. Mrs. Durant and I decided that I would list the nine in order of priority according to their ability to articulate and other elements previously explained. She would call each administrator from the top of the list to find out if he or she would consent to participation. As it happened, fortune shone on me. The work station coordinators of the six students at the top of the list all consented to the research. The remaining three students were contacted, thanked for their participation to date, and provided with an explanation for their exclusion from the remainder of the study. I now had six students and six work stations.

All six participants chosen could continue. We had received verbal consent of parents, signed consent of students (bottom of questionnaire) and verbal consent of work station administrators. Now I mailed out a letter of permission to parents and one to work station administrators, informing them of their right to leave the study at any time, and that confidentiality would be strictly adhered to. All letters were signed and returned. I had sent two copies of each letter, one to be kept by the parent or work station since it was a source of information to them of my telephone number and the scope of the research.

Most of the interviews were conducted in the conference room located between the office and the small work education corner at the school. Since we had to book the conference room, there were times it was unavailable for use. At those times, a small office within the guidance centre was used, and another time Mrs. Durant's desk in the work education corner was utilized. The conference room was the best location, it seemed, for privacy and space. There was a large conference table, seating 12 with large swivel chairs and convenient plug-ins should I require them for my tape recorder. There was adequate lighting and soundproofing.

The second set of interviews was conducted at the midpoint of each person's experience; the third at the completion of the 125 hours. The mid-point interview was also 45 minutes in length; but the last interview was approximately 75 minutes long. Before the second and third interviews, each student was given a printed copy of his or her previous interview transcript, and asked to report any discrepancies.

There was an interview guide for each interview; the longest guide at the beginning, less questions for the second; and only three guiding questions for the third. That system of tapering off the number of questions as time went on, seemed to work well.

The first interview, where I tried to get acquainted with the students and have them identify their vocational choices in terms of interests, preferences and abilities in the light of an occupation,. seemed to need more direction. Furthermore, students had not yet participated at their work station. At midpoint they found it easier to communicate with me, therefore needing less guiding questions. By the third interview they seemed to want to start talking without my asking any questions whatsoever.

During the second interview with one of the six participants, it became apparent that getting at meanings that she was perceiving would be difficult. Since this was her second round, I had decided to stay with her in the program even though she appeared very withdrawn at the first interview. In fact, she was rather unpleasant during the second interview, and I realized that nothing could be gained by trying to force information from someone who was reluctant or otherwise unable to express herself. Together we decided that she would terminate her involvement in the study. Since I was so pleased with the uniqueness of each of the other five cases, I decided to try to complete five and write up all five cases instead of the original design of four cases.

Questions which proved to be mother lodes of information were: "Describe your happiest day on the job so far" (asked on the second and third interviews); and "What are some of the differences in work education and school-based classes?"

About half-way through the experience for most students, a group interview was scheduled at noon hour at the school with Mrs. Durant in attendance. All the original eleven interviewees were invited. Eight attended. The narratives were not taped, simply because it was impossible to pick up the voice of each person even with the recorder situated in the middle of the table. However I jotted a few notes during the discussion and wrote up field notes directly after the session.

After the initial interview with the students and choosing the ones with whom I would continue, I contacted the work stations to arrange for a brief interview with the administrator or supervisor. Although I would have enjoyed spending 45 minutes to an hour with each work station representative, I limited my request to 15 minutes when I realized how reluctant each one was to take too much time out of their busy schedules. I did not tape-record the interviews. When I mentioned the usefulness of taping the interview to the first administrator that I contacted, she expressed a definite dislike of being taped. She further stated that she may be forced to answer the telephone and give instructions to staff while answering my questions, therefore rendering the recording rather jumbled. When I actually did interview her, I found her predictions about interruptions to be quite true. I decided that forcing the issue might endanger my access to the station to observe the student and ultimately my study. Because of the short interview time allowed by the administrators, the interview guide was used in a much more structured manner than the student interviews. If, however, participants took the time to tell me more than the answers to my questions, I certainly encouraged them to do so.

Although the personnel in most work stations were prepared for my visit, and welcomed me, there was one work station where the opposite was true. A thicker description of just that episode as well as the actual observation at the work station, is included in the case of Elvis.

Generally, the supervisor designated by the administrator at the work station was the person in most contact with the work education student. In one case, the McDonald's Travel Agency, the case of Maria, the administrator was also the supervisor. Typically, the amount of interaction that took place between the administrator and the work education student was minimal, except for the imposing of rules and regulations and signing evaluation forms.

Interviews with supervisors directly responsible for assigning and overseeing the student's activities were very informally conducted during or right after the observation. I kept the structure of this latter interview flexible, depending on the individual work station and the supervisor's own preference. While interviewing, I jotted down phrases in a small notebook, in the same way that I was recording observations. Later I wrote up my field notes on both the interview and the observation as soon as possible after I had left the work station.

Having worked on analysis of the data for a few weeks, I found that there were still some puzzling areas. I had written letters to students and work station administrators to inform them that I was beginning the analysis, and that I would call to check selected items.

When I did call, I found the students most willing to answer my questions and offer more information; the administrators and supervisors were not that easy to pin down. Two administrators: Mrs. Rajah, from Lansdown Animal Clinic, and Mrs. Middleton from the Next-to-New Computer Company did not return my calls. After three attempts to each, I decided to terminate that effort. The two administrators and one supervisor who did afford me the time, were very cooperative in answering my questions, to the point of volunteering information not requested.

Transcription

All of the interviews with students were transcribed. Where a section of narration was deemed irrelevant to the study, it was left out but there was an indication through the use of three dots and the location number on the tape, should I ever wish to listen to that section.

Before transcribing each interview tape, I read over my field notes that I had written up right after the interview. This served to refresh my memory of what I had found unique, puzzling or to make connections. Sometimes transcription did not happen for a week or so after the interview simply because a transcription machine was not available. During transcription, if I wanted to indicate the tone of voice, expression, or emotion that I was hearing, I indicated it in my typed copy with brackets around that field note. As I was transcribing, I rejoiced in being able to complete the transcription myself instead of getting someone else to do it. In both listening once more to the voice of the participant and in seeing the words on my computer screen, I was also remembering the actual event of interviewing. Those three sensory images were providing me with a rich base from which to assimilate my analytic notes.

Participant Observation

Getting into the setting for observation as well as brief interviewing of supervisors or administrators was not accomplished by one quick telephone call. In each situation, work station personnel stated they were busy and wanted the right to choose the time that I came. Their schedule had to be matched with my availability.

Although I was not now taking classes, I was also doing interviews, and of course I was making appointments for observations in work stations. So, if one work station supervisor wanted Friday morning and I already had an observation scheduled for that time, sometimes I had to wait two weeks before a suitable date could be set. Furthermore, I had to take into account travelling time between school and work station and between work stations. Twice I had set up interviews with students who did not show up and I had an empty slot but work stations could not accept me for observations on such short notice.

This situation played havoc with my own personal schedule from Monday to Friday. I recall rescheduling my dental appointment three times! If I was not so intensely interested in understanding the experience at the work station, I certainly would have been discouraged from continuing.

I reminded myself that I knew this business of doing research outside a school situation was going to be difficult. Business people may not be too familiar with research, and perhaps somewhat suspicious of it. Countless masters' and doctoral theses lining the shelves of the Education Library were almost all accomplished through one or more school situations. Schools might be expected to be more comfortable with an observer or a "watcher." Small business is not.

Suffice it to say that the logistics of setting up the observations took a considerable amount of time, effort and patience on my part.

Field Notes

After each time in the setting, I wrote up my field notes describing the setting and what I had observed. I also made some analytic notes connecting some observed phenomena with those reported in the student participant interviews. When I thought I saw a theme emerging, I made a note of it with the accompanying dialogue and filed it away in a folder called "themes." The theme of "insider vs. outsider" appeared as a tentative choice quite early in the research process. After that this theme seemed to literally shout at me, demanding explication.

Field notes were written on all interviews with administrators and supervisor. Analytic notes accompanied these as well. To clarify some puzzling phenomena recorded in the transcripts or the field notes, questions were formulated for use in future student participant interviews.

Analysis and Coding of Data

Analysis of data from transcription, analytic notes taken during the taped interview, and field notes of untaped interviews and observations, took place to a certain extent all through the research process. Since I used double and even triple-spacing in the typed copies of all of these sources of data, I was able simply to use a colored pen to put in analytic notes, and beginnings of themes. A selected group of narrations were deduced to analytic units as demonstrated in Appendix F.

Sometime before the third interview, I could sense some unique themes but could not really sense commonality in more than the one insider/outsider theme. I seemed to alternate between exhilaration of discovering a metaphor to describe a theme, and despair that I would never be able to make sense of all data. There were days when reading the interview transcriptions seemed to produce no new insight and I chided myself for not having asked the right questions.

Just before the third set of interviews, I looked over my interview guide and wondered what magic question would give me what I needed. I had decided to extend the interview to 75 minutes from 45 to allow for more dialogue. I was feeling once more a sense of desperation. "If I do not get it this time, I'm sunk." All through this period of unease, my advisor very wisely reassured me and calmed my anxious spirit. Much to my relief, Elvis, in his third interview seemed quite relaxed with me and answered my questions as well as simply sharing his view of the experience. That trend of an easy flow in the informant's narration was to be an established trend for the balance of the last taped interviews.

As previously planned, I took five weeks away from the data, three weeks of which I was on holiday with my husband. When I returned to it, I went through a severe avoidance syndrome. For a week I literally ran away from my files, computer and tapes. Finally, after talking to a friend, I was able to sit down to the analysis once more.

My advisor suggested that I start by writing up the five cases. I chose to write up Maria first. After four re-writes, I finally had the courage to let my advisor read it.

Having completed the description of all five cases, I reached another stalemate in the process of analysis. Several tentative themes had come to light but I was having trouble putting them into a comprehensible framework. Reading and re-reading all the data became a regular exercise for me. At times the printed words refused to yield any new insights or uncover connections.

After a decidedly unproductive session, I experienced a tremendous temptation to simply put it off or run away from the task before me. I reasoned with my inner voice, "I'm not getting anywhere anyway; I need to get away from it for a fresh start." Alas, getting back to the data seemed even more difficult. In those valley situations, I was blessed by an understanding husband who slyly urged me to quit, knowing full well it would help move me to do the opposite; and an advisor who listened and helped me to see what was there waiting to be made visible. Hours spent "playing" with the themes and the data seemed to reveal a very "neat" framework. A telephone call to my advisor revealed that I should try again. Ah, well, I always knew there was something wrong, but I just wanted to get it finished!

Everything and everyone around me had become a distraction: some people unwittingly distracted me while I compounded the effect by inviting distractions when no one obliged. Working in my home office proved stifling: I needed air. Outside the yard and garden beckoned for my expert ministrations. Inside the closets yawned their contents, begging for the traditional spring cleaning. Sheer panic seemed to be rising in me.

At this point I shared my dilemma with my husband who lost no time in providing a new venue for me. "You need the tranquility of the mountains, my dear," he announced decidedly. When I started to protest my inability to leave house and garden, he adopted a stern stance which I dared not oppose: "Call the hotel for a reservation and pack your toothbrush because you're leaving tomorrow morning."

The majestic Rockies were my repose. Once more I read the data and "played" with the themes. Free of anxiety, I slept peacefully. The next morning I called my advisor. I cannot recall the exact topic of our conversation. Connecting with my life-line against the backdrop of invigorating mountain air, as well as the anonymity of the place, put my mind in gear once again.

The word was out at the hotel: there was a writer on the premises. I smiled as I overheard the front desk clerks talking about me. My goodness, another Margaret Atwood, no less. I wrote at the desk in my room, taking in the mountains during reflective pauses; I wrote while reclining at the hotel's sun deck; I wrote in the hotel's restaurant while sipping coffee.

While tourists all around me were busy being bussed to all the sights, I enjoyed the facilities virtually undisturbed.

Singing as I headed home, I felt renewed in spirit. With my new thematic structure in hand, I consulted my advisor. Ah, bliss it was to hear the words, "Yes, I like your themes: they seem to make sense."

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Since this study sought to explicate meanings in the context of the High School Work Experience Program and in relation to the participant's career development process, literature in three different areas is herein reviewed. No relevant studies were found that combined all three areas of interest: career development, work education, and a search for deeper meaning.

Career Development

Hotchkiss (1979) states that although scientific literature about occupational choice is massive, it has not produced a theory without considerable ambivalence. The determination of vocational choice within vocational psychology has evolved over the years ever broadening its perspective as more research identified more factors of choice as well as a view of a complex interrelationship of factors to influence individual occupational choice. Several theorists, among them, Ginzberg (1972), Tolbert (1980), and Super (1983) concur with the view that it is unlikely one theory will serve for many diverse populations in our society.

The inclusion of cognition has been proposed toward a more comprehensive theory of occupational choice by Lewis and Gilhousen (1981). Although the student cognitions are viewed as important in other types of therapeutic processes, little attention is given to the thoughts and perceptions a student has during the development of choice. Interests, values and occupational information are of little consequence if the individual cannot put them in a realistic perspective.

Many of the studies undertaken on occupational choice sought to measure interaction of two factors or to identify a causal relationship, but very few actually measured a number of influential factors of a particular population. Most were determining psychosocial factors without any relation to environmental ones.

Baumgardner (1982) addresses the issue of uncertainty in career decision making. He proposes that changes in the working world are showing up in students' life planning and career thinking. Students have a very limited perception of what it is like to actually live a particular occupation. Career thinking is unrealistic and reflects abstract as well as idealized images drawn from media, courses, advice of friends, and relatives and our culture's myths about work. Baumgardner further advances the view that current uncertainties about the availability and meaning of work seem to cause many students to despair when their ideal career images are debunked. He postulates two valuable influences on occupational choice: work education both as paid part-time work and part of a school work study program; and knowledge of obtaining jobs in an occupation from recent graduates.

Noeth, Engen, and Noeth (1984) conducted a study of college-bound high school seniors to find the most significant factors that helped them in choosing a college major and those which helped them in choosing an occupation. Work education occurred as a fourth factor out of ten factors in order of frequency. This figure could be distorted through the actual percentage of students that took part in work education; also there is no differentiation between work education as supervised by the school, and the experience obtained through part time or full time employment outside of school supervision. It is not known what proportion of those answering the survey gained their work education through employment not directly related to their career choice. It is therefore difficult to interpret the meaning or significance of the frequency of the factor of work education to choose a college major or an occupation.

Career conflict was studied in high aspiration youth in British Columbia by Cochran and Giza (1986). The study showed that when a person is free to select values and frame them in personal ways, conflict is minimized. The authors conclude by saying,

> A searching and serious exploration would seem to offer a way to help young people establish more solid priorities with which to make wiser decisions and adjustments.

Although this study did not isolate participation in a work education program as a way of exploring seriously, I perceive applicability in its findings to career development through work education.

Greenhaus, Hawkins, and Brenner (1983) studied the impact of career exploration on the career decision-making process. Of the students surveyed, 57 per cent had either participated in a part-time job in the past or were currently engaged in a part-time job that was relevant to their career decisions. Although the use of friends and family members was the most popular form of career exploration, it was not related to the development of a career decision. Along with self and occupational exploration, exploratory employment and previous work education were positively related to value clarity and career knowledge. The authors found a significant relationship between two kinds of experience in the world of work and elements of career development. However, they failed to explain the underlying meanings of the students who participated.

Fitzsimmons (1979) speaks of career education as a process instead of content. An assumption basic to career education is that it is a preparation for life, and that experiences must be provided that prepare children for more living rather than just more schooling. I find applicability to my study in his article on all three tenets summarized here: process, preparation for life, living rather than just more schooling. In the style of most career development theorists and researchers, Fitzsimmons does not allude to the lens of work education through which the tenets for career education might be absorbed.

Taylor (1968) states that studies show occupational choice at the individual level is very complex. The controversy on how people select occupations ranges from theories of economic dominance to psychological dominance. However, studies do show that occupational choice does depend on occupations that are familiar to individuals. The author does not explicate the meaning of "occupations that are familiar to individuals." What is the meaning of "familiar?" Once again I view this study as being applicable to the work education program wherein participants can familiarize themselves with a chosen occupation.

Work Education

Herr (1978) sees work education at the secondary school level as a way of providing adult-oriented experience at the work station rather than adolescent-oriented experience. He argues that work experience assists youth to see themselves, their characteristics, and how the work is done as a whole.

Snell (1981) conducted a study of what traits employers found valuable in work education participants. Variables related to the nature and extent of students' skill competencies and general work attitudes were ranked of highest importance. The study did not find out students' own perceptions of their skill competencies and general work attitudes, and compare these to those which the employers had about the students.

Germscheid (1982) in a University of Alberta dissertation studied "Work Experience Education Program Effectiveness and Organization." His empirical study found significant differences in the perceptions of students and their work station supervisors on the degree of values attained by the students. The supervisors' accounts showed significantly lower ratings than students' own perceptions of themselves. I wonder if this is indicative of the very limited interaction that typically exists at the work station between the supervisor and the student. The study stops short of finding out the underlying assumptions, meanings and values of both the students and the supervisors.

Owens and Owens (1981) studied 4,000 students in thirty high school experiential education programs. The factors which contributed most to gains in social and personal responsibility were: discussed experience with teachers, did things myself instead of observing, adult did not criticize me or my work, had adult responsibilities, developed personal relationship with someone on site, had freedom to explore my own interests, discussed experience with family and friends, felt I made a contribution, had a variety of tasks, got help when I needed it, and had challenging tasks. In my preliminary interviews with work education students here in Adelaide, I recognized several of those factors in the context of the conversations of those students who described their work education as "very positive."

Search for a Deeper Meaning

Reubens (1977) has suggested that the transition from school to work has emerged as an independent area for study and action. The transition between school and work is judged to be too swift and abrupt. The initial transition experience is considered crucial and is said to exert a decisive influence on a young person's whole occupational future. This author's theoretical stance is congruent with my own, but I find he falls short of explicating a vehicle whereby this transition can be accomplished in a way that is positively meaningful to the individual.

Per Dalin (1983) contends that schools can no longer assume a knowledge dissemination role in isolation from the community. He states that knowledge will be defined less and less in terms of subjective structures and more as problem-oriented and integrated with critical-theoretical reflection. Dalin states that,

> Schools will continue to exist as institutions that can bring the complex world together by helping people to explore themselves and the world in which they live.

His message was delivered at an International Movement Towards Educational Change Conference in 1983 held in Oslo, Norway. The theme of this conference was "Learning by Participation." Dalin's article is just an example of many articles written by international writers on the topic of "Learning Through Active Experience." The work education program fits into the more global rubric of "experiential education" and "off campus-based learning."

Twarog (1979) conducted a study on four cooperative educational programs whose students represented the full range of abilities from below average to the gifted. This is the only study that I have found in the field that was not conducted in the empirical mode. The approach is identified as anthropological, interviewing over 500 participants including students, coordinators, work site sponsors, school administrators and parents. The study was a comparative case study of four actual work education programs. The researchers became increasingly aware that, although there are several variables such as geographic area, length of program, interpersonal dyadic relationships with the program, and socioeconomic status of students, there are certain commonalities that appear across all these programs.

Common factors relevant for students deciding to enter the cooperative educational program were cited: desire for more adventuresome program, realistic awareness of economic needs, boredom with traditional school structure, and testing of future career choices. Twarog claims that these commonalities distinguish the program from the traditional American high school program.

Young (1981) advocates the idea of a vocation as a self-other relationship. He contrasts this ontological view with the prevailing career theory paradigm which he states is entangled with an excessively technological view of a person. Recently some theorists have begun to recognize the context in which career develops, notably Krumboltz (1979) and Gottfredson (1981). Young proposes, however, that these theorists account for environmental influences on the individual but do not address the interaction of all these influences.

Young (1981) states that vocation refers to life stories that encompass an extended period of time. The author concludes with an exhortation to all those helping people with career development to be concerned how the person engages the environment and how meaning will be attained. Young's article has particular applicability to my study which seeks to look at meaning through career development from the context of the work station.

Simon (1983), an Ontario work education coordinator, argues that work education programs can provide the opportunity for a critical counter-hegemonic pedagogy. "Hegemonic" is defined as that which is of predominant influence. Given an interest in programs which link school and the workplace, Simon advocates the need for a form of analysis that addresses how a student experiences such programs. The explication of such meaning would be a stepping stone to knowing how to define our work in the world and in so doing ultimately transform the world. I perceive his aim to transform the world rather utopian; but, nevertheless, it is worthy of serious consideration and a tremendous challenge to educators.

Freire (1980) in a workshop on a work study approach for community education says that "active experience and active work is the source of true understanding." Further he defines study as a creature evolving from work and defines work as the source of new knowledge and study. He views work as a process of understanding in which theory develops out of practice. Application may be found in this study where students have been chosen as participants chiefly because they are participating in work education in order to explore career choice. Will the experiences of student participants at the work station (practice) help them develop (theory) to apply to the career choice process?

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDIES

Maria

Parental Expectations and Vocational Choice

Maria is 18 years old and in her second year of grade 12 at Champion High School. She is the third child in a family of five children, all of whom were born in an Asian country. The family emigrated here eight years ago in search of an economically better life.

According to her own account, Maria's parents have told her to "be something professional." Her father reminds her that they came to this country so that the children would have an opportunity to "be something." The parents instruct Maria to work harder at her school work in order to make high grades. These grades will provide entry into the field of nurses' training or other "professional" fields. She claims that she simply cannot attain the required grade average needed to be accepted into the field of nurses' training.

Maria thinks her mother understands why she went back for a second year of grade 12. Maria's view of her father is that he is angry with her. She said,

> He says, 'You must be the only one returning to grade 12, really dumb'. Maria says,
> He is a really negative person, my dad is strict . . . doesn't like people going back to school, feels like you're so dumb.

In talking about her occupational choice her father has recently suggested that she be a machinist. He has seen a lady doing that job at his place of work and knows that it pays well. Maria adopts a plaintive tone when she relates her conversation with her father,

> That's not me, I'm not her, I'd like to decide what I want and if I make that mistake, it's my mistake, not your mistake.

According to Maria, her father was also pressured into training for the job of machinist even though he didn't want it. Asked what occupation she was thinking of engaging in, independent of her parents, she said she told them of her interest in fashion. Her dad did not like that idea. She thought about it and rejected it for various reasons: possible conflict in leisure time, very demanding, lots of work and uncertainty of her ability to get people's attention.

Maria's average at this point filled the requirements of Cambridge College for entry into Travel and Tourism. When Maria investigated this occupation at Cambridge, she was informed of another requirement: at least one year out of school, or participation in work education at a travel agency. The work education requirement was in addition to the high school diploma and suitable grade average. Although she later stated that she was in the program to try out an occupation, initially the reason for taking the course was a need for those work education credits in a travel agency in order to qualify for entrance into the Travel and Tourism Program.

At the end of her first year of grade 12, Maria's mother looked at her marks and conceded that she was "not doing very well." It was then that the mother offered an alternative career choice to Maria: Travel and Tourism. A daughter of the mother's friend had taken the Travel and Tourism course at Career College and found it interesting. Maria decided to go back to school for a second year of grade 12 and to subsequently enrol in Cambridge for the Travel and Tourism course.

Maria had already explored the possibility of taking the Travel Tourism Course at Career College. While talking to a counselor there she was told that "You travel a lot in this job." That prospect of travelling as part of a job excited her. She remembered how much she had enjoyed the recent family trip to California.

The Glamour Myth of Travel Agents' Work

When I asked her if she knew much about the work of a travel agent and the salary and benefits, her face seemed to take on a glow as she replied. She did not know what the salaries were, but she knew the agents helped arrange travel for other people and got to travel a great deal themselves. Her view of travel agents' work seemed to be centered on how they helped clients to have a good a time, and in the process "had a lot of fun."

Researcher Reflections

I watched her starry eyes and animated face and heard her fanciful but vague description of the work. My mind took me back to different phases of my own occupational path. First of all a vision of a young girl in grade 10 in 1964 in one of my typing classes flashed before me. "What would you like to do when you finish school Vi?" I had asked her. Without hesitation she told me of her dream to be an airline stewardess. I lost track of her for many years but could not help wondering, as I did about so many others, whether she had been able to make that dream come true. Years later while on a flight, I looked up at the stewardess who was asking me what I wanted to drink. Suddenly I had a sense of recognition. She too seemed to give me a second look but went on serving drinks, rushing to meet her schedule.

Just before the plane landed, I looked up once again at the same young lady, who politely asked me if I was "Miss Hunka, a school teacher I used to have." She was indeed my typing student of 1964 who followed through on her dream. I now congratulated her enthusiastically for having achieved her long-time wish. In response, she replied, "Ah, it's just a job." Meanwhile the light in her face snuffed out and she shrugged her shoulders. I longed to ask her more but now the plane was landing and she needed to carry out her normal duties. For days afterwards I experienced a kind of malaise, almost as if I had said "good bye" to an old friend. Upon examination of my thoughts, I realized I was mourning the death of Vi's dream that had fizzled into "just a job."

Terkel (1974) in his book Working describes the death of a glamour myth for an airline stewardess that he interviewed. Even 14 years into her job, she received a great deal of respect and status from outside sources as well as her own family members. What she herself was experiencing, however, was the drudgery of the actual work and working conditions. The glamour that outsiders accorded her occupation was not being experienced by her in her day-to-day activities.

A composite of memories now flashed before me as I thought about so many high school students who were eager to take work education at my work station, a travel agency. I was seeing their eager yet nervous faces. When I asked them why they were interested in the travel agency for work education, the first reply was a predictable, "Because I like to travel." I spent a great deal of time explaining the drawbacks of working in the occupation and also the long waiting time before travel becomes part of the job.

For so many my words fell on deaf ears. They were busy feasting their eyes on the exotic brochures around the agency. Some persisted, came to the agency for a work education round and went away sadly disillusioned after completing the 125 hours. They seemed to need that experience of being in the situation on a day-to-day basis, interacting with travel agents to help dispel the myth of glamour in the travel agent's world.

I looked once again at Maria's face, so full of anticipation of the experience in her perceived world of glamour. A sense of panic enveloped me. Just as if Maria was standing at the edge of a cliff, I wanted to shout, "Stop, there's a big drop ahead of you, do not go further, choose a different path." How could I let her go through the disillusionment I had witnessed in so many others? A little voice seemed to caution me, "You are a researcher, Cathy, you must not influence the participant." I said nothing for a moment as I scanned my interview guide through tear-dimmed eyes. Then I composed myself as best I could and went on with the questions in a more detached manner.

Leisure-Work Time Balance

Maria wants it all: not just a job that would be her whole life. She wants friends and work. She is not interested in devoting herself entirely to her job without time for leisure. Her opinion is, "Yes, there is a perfect job out there. You just have to strive to find out what it is." I wondered what kinds of experiences and sources of information have influenced the idealistic halo that she is determined to attach to an occupation. The importance of money to Maria has come up a few times in the interview, yet she has not made herself aware of the salary of a travel agent, the job she is presumably exploring.

Job Preferences and Self

When describing what she prefers in types of activities in an occupation, she cites: computer, typing, data processing, to have deadlines, to solve things, and to keep busy. Maria has difficulty in answering my questions on what her perceived aptitudes, interests and abilities are. Eventually she identifies the ability to take orders and take criticism, interest in people and what they are thinking and an interest in money. She admits that she's never allowed herself to open up to other occupational opportunities on her own because she is always thinking of what her parents want her to do.

In exploring the computerized occupational choice program called "Choices," she stated she was angry with the results because she did not like the occupational matches that were recommended. She perceived the form was matching her with an occupation in the army or to be "confined in an office" because her marks were very low. She could not imagine herself in any of the choices given.

Difference Between Work Education and a Job

In her view the difference between a job and work education was that the major thrust of being in work education was to learn about a career, whereas in the job one works, gets paid and sticks to it.

Career Exploration and Time

Maria seemed to have difficulty in accepting the concept of ongoing career development through life. Perhaps some of the anxiety she was experiencing in making career choice decisions stemmed from her belief that it is a once-in-a-life-time decision. She reported to me that her parents' instruction was to "make up your mind and stick to it." In the first interview she kept coming to closure on career choice, telling me that she was finding out what a travel agent's job was like because she had chosen that occupation. She was not leaving her options open. When I mentioned that I was perceiving her to be "closed" in terms of her occupational exploration, she stated that her parents were in a hurry to have her "settle down." She sensed she had no time to be open and to keep exploring. There was a sense of urgency, especially since she was in her second year of grade 12.

Researcher Concerns

When the interview was over, I was experiencing turmoil. This was my very first of the pre-placement interviews. I had eleven more to do in this set. Would I be experiencing the same conflict between my role as a researcher and my own personal tendency to be protective of these participants? I shared this concern with Mrs. Durant, the work experience coordinator, who assured me that Maria needed to experience for herself. She told me that some of her students just would not believe or did not seem to have a clear concept if they were told job facts or read about a job in a brochure. That was one of the advantages of taking part in a work education program: finding out about work on first-hand basis.

I resolved then to think about Maria's pending work education at the travel agency in a positive light. Mrs. Durant reminded me that I would be there to help Maria through the disillusionment. At that point I did not realize how much Maria would reach out to me for help. Nor did I comprehend the extent to which her experience would provide me with interesting information for the research.

Grappling with the Reality of Unforeseen Circumstances

I called Maria to set up her second interview, at approximately the half-way mark (65 hours) at the work station. She had already experienced much of the disillusionment I had anticipated. In fact she was discouraged to the point of wanting to quit.

Two events had precipitated her emotional upheaval. First, one of the agents had resigned, and a replacement had not been hired until after the agent had left the agency's employ. A short-staffing situation for two weeks followed by a new staffing situation all happened during the travel agency's busiest season. Into this pressure-laden setting another event caused Maria frustration. A work education student from one of the travel colleges had come to do his practicum. The timing of his arrival had been pre-arranged just as Maria's was, before the employee had resigned.

Maria reported that no one even spoke to her, let alone spent time with her training her in any way during this situation. At the time of the interview, the college work education student still had a few days left to finish his practicum. Anna, the supervisor, had asked Maria to show him the filing she was doing in the "back room" where Maria did her work. That day, Maria recorded in her journal,

> How was I supposed to explain what I was doing to him when I don't even know what I'm doing! I don't want to go back. No one has time for me.

Researcher Changes Role

Inwardly I sighed. The situation she was describing was so familiar to me, yet I must try to get at her meanings as well as trying to help her to see the whole picture. So, I consciously decided to step out of my role as a researcher and help her to stay at the work site. I could have simply suggested that she talk to the work experience coordinator, Mrs. Durant. Instead I advised her to call her supervisor and ask if she could stay away from the work education situation for a few days until the other student had left. After she nodded in agreement with a sigh of relief, we talked about the situation from the supervisor's point of view.

Maria's natural timid nature seemed to impede her from communicating with her supervisor to let her know just how much this new staffing and college work education student situation was impacting her. I asked Maria if she understood the viewpoint of the supervisor and other agents in the setting at this time. She said, "yes" somewhat uncertainly. I asked her what she would do if she was the supervisor. She conceded that most of the time would have to be spent with the new staff person, but she felt that at least 25% be reserved for Maria during the hours she was there. For the moment she perceived others in the setting totally ignoring her. A later interview with her supervisor, Anna, uncovered a different view and a break in communication between Maria and Anna.

Lack of Reciprocal Dialogue

Anna thought Maria had been there long enough before the short-staffing situation developed. She thought Maria had mastered the routine tasks she had been assigned and would therefore need very little instruction, during this particularly busy time. As far as the college work education student, Anna thought Maria would have been pleased that Anna trusted her and had confidence in her enough to ask her to show John the filing and records in storage. Anna was completely surprised that Maria did not perceive herself as being capable of showing John her work.

I was beginning to build a mental picture of the setting that caused this communication breakdown. Maria in the back room, isolated from the front office, occasionally peaking out at the front office and observing the busyness of everyone there. Maria was not brave enough to voice her concerns to Anna or the other agents and also reluctant to bother them when they were so busy. On the other hand, Anna, busy in hiring a new person, training her, closely followed by helping a college work education student, was operating under severe time constraints. She was simply assuming that Maria was doing fine on her own. Having experienced a similar situation myself when I was a work station supervisor, and remembering the feeling of conflict of interest, I tried to help Maria to visualize that side of the picture.

A Back Room View

During the second interview Maria expressed a pronounced dislike for her work in the "back room." I had decided to interview Maria before entering the setting for my own observations. Since I had been in the setting on six occasions when I was doing a pilot study 18 months previous to this time, I retained a mental picture of the "back room." I remembered Maria's disgust with the computerized program, "Choices" which she viewed as a disparaging instrument matching her only with the army or with being "confined in an office." Since she already had developed a concept of confinement in relation to office jobs in general, I could understand how the small room that she was working in by herself might be an extreme example of her aversion to office confinement.

When asked whether she thought she would dislike agents' work, she replied that she thought their work was interesting. It was her own work that she disliked. More importantly it was the context in which she was performing the work that bothered her the most. She described the "back room" as small, dark and isolated from the exciting action of the front office which she had visualized herself as being a part of when she enrolled in work education. The agents were working with clients, with computers and talking about countries to which clients will travel. She said, "I just wish I could get out of that back room." Maria could imagine herself doing agents' work.

So I wondered why she was getting negative feelings about her participation in work education. She stated that she was only thinking of herself in her work at the back. When asked how she might help herself out of the caged feeling of the back room, she suggested being up front as receptionist or answering the phone but was uncertain of how she could perform, and she was concerned that there was so much work in the back.

Maria was concerned at this point that she really wasn't getting the full picture of the travel agency's work. Even so, she had made some judgments about the work. She thought the agents had a lot more work and a lot more paper work than she had anticipated.

At approximately the 100 hour point in Maria's work education, I made an appointment for an interview with Anna, her supervisor. During our discussion, I was amazed to discover that Anna wondered why Maria always stayed in the back room.

> She doesn't seem to come out of there at all. Sometimes I go in there past her time and still find her there, working. I never see her in the front office.

When I asked Anna whether she thought Maria could do some of her work in the front, she said that she expected the work education student to come out and ask for more work. Maria seemed to be a slow worker because she did not run out of work before Anna gave her more assignments. Anna was comparing Maria's production to that of previous work education students.

I asked Anna if she had told Maria that she should come out every so often. Anna told me that she had a talk with Maria just as she did with every work education student at the beginning, informing them of their duties and what was expected. Anna did not expect to have to remind Maria what to do. She simply did not have time for that, she told me. Later, in the third interview I told Maria that Anna had expected her out of the back room more often. Maria was amazed. When I reported my conversation with Anna in that regard, she admitted that Anna probably had told her everything at the beginning, but that she was so depressed over the short-staffing and college practicum student situation, she had forgotten.

The Bubble Bursts

In the first interview Maria expressed an affinity for working towards a deadline. Now she spoke about deadlines as problematic to the travel agents. One of the greatest points of disillusionment was finding out that an agent had to cancel a trip for herself, paid by the agency, simply because of short staffing. The glamour of the travel agent's role was fast fading in Maria's mind. I hated to see her suffering; yet I realized that in suffering she was also learning and perhaps preventing an incorrect occupational choice for herself.

On Being the Outsider

Maria's overwhelming feeling of being ignored as well as coping with the "reality" of agency life probably overshadowed her view of the experience. The agents tended to come to the back room to pick up a brochure or some other information. If Maria was there, occasionally they made comments to her about the deadlines and the tremendous demands on their time, especially during the short and new staffing period.

Maria could not think of any positive aspect to her experience at this midpoint. In her view she was not learning anything, since she was just stamping and filing. She expressed concern that she did not know where all the forms fit into the picture and had a feeling of confusion.

One of the expectations she had was that the staff would be friendly to her, accept her as one of them, and have a good relationship with her. The idea of friendships and relationships as part of the job was still very important to her when she described her ideal job.

I asked what she would do differently, if she was the supervisor, in order to help the student out of the back room. Maria was quick to respond. She wouldn't allow the work education girl to be stuck in the back room. She would encourage her to do some of the work out in the open, help clients as a receptionist, help agents and see the "big picture."

At this point the happiest day since she started work education, was the evening Jean, an agent, had invited her to a farewell supper for the agent who had resigned. It was at this event that Maria enjoyed being accepted as "one of them." Back at the work site she feels like a stranger much of the time.

Getting Reacquainted with the Setting

After the second interview, I visited Maria at the work site, McDonald's Travel. The setting is a travel agency office located in an older medium-sized mall, approximately two miles from Champion High School. The colors of blue and off white are used throughout the small outer office which is about 12 feet by 20 feet in size. Colors are repeated in cabinets, counters and brochure racks. The lighting is fluorescent producing a brightness that might indicate more than the required footcandles. The accent in color is provided by the orange steno chairs with castors, for the three agents and six client chairs. The manager sits at a full double pedestal desk towards the back of the outer office and is screened off by blue and beige vertical rotating blinds.

The entire front of the office is glass and glass sliding doors. The right and left sides are built-in showcases for travel brochure display. As one walks into the office, there is a small counter on the right with a computer; a ticket printer and a typewriter just behind a counter. On the left hand side there is a long, low (sitting height) counter against the wall with file cabinets below it and three positions for the agents. The first jutting division away from the counter holds a computer; at the back end of the counter there is a typewriter. Each agent position has a multiple-line telephone, as does the front counter and manager's desk. On the counter next to the wall is a "no smoking" sign and a small humidifier. Both jutting divisions have two client chairs placed next to them.

This office is a branch of a very large chain with offices across Canada. There is a manager and five employees: three full-time; two part-time. When a client comes in, and does not know where to go, one of the agents sitting in her own position, asks if she can help and invites the client to sit at a client chair near her station. There is no actual agent position at the front counter. The most senior agent is at the front, and the most junior agent in terms of employment is at the back of that row.

The back room which Maria refers to and where she claims to work almost exclusively, is basically a storage room with less light than the main office, without a desk, but with a chair. The coffee machine is also in the back room. There are file cabinets, a safe and photocopier. Along three walls there are open shelves for storage. The room is long and narrow measuring about 12 feet by 4 feet. There is not more than 18 inches between the file cabinets on one wall and the open shelves on the other. The door to the outer office is kept closed at all times. It is in these cramped quarters that the work education participant does her work.

Observing the Participant in the Setting

Maria, is doing some of her work, as I come in to the back room. She is sorting invoices in preparation for filing. She uses the top of a four drawer filing cabinet to do the sorting. She shows me the files when I ask and points to a pile of brochures that are on boxes. These, she tells me, need to be unpacked and stamped, and put away, both in front and in files at the back. I note she says "put in front." So, I ask her if she does indeed work in the front. She nods in agreement, but states that it is just for five minutes each day, if that.

I recall my observation of Adel, the work education student during my pilot project at the same work station. She also did much of her work in the back room. However, Adel was also typing at the front counter (standing up, since there was no chair) and working with files in the outer office. Adel, of course, was in her third round of work education when I interviewed her. She had progressed to doing more work in the outer office. She, too, told of being "stuck in the back office" much of the time in the first round. I recalled that Adel, also, had wanted to quit at the end of the first round.

Maria shows me a project which she has not completed and which she must retype due to spelling errors. Anna has asked her to type up a list of prospective customers and their addresses from slips of paper filled out for a prize. Maria has difficulty deciphering various peoples' writing and trouble guessing what the name might be. For example, she points to a slip of paper that she couldn't make out but guessed that it read "Brounuell." Even though the writing was not clear, I would have guessed, "Brownwell." Maria tells me that Anna told her that the name was indeed "Brownwell."

I remembered that Maria has shared with me her problems in English. She now tells me that she has a serious problem spelling. She says, "I don't have trouble with numbers, but spelling names, (she shook her head)." I wondered if Maria was learning about matching ability to job requirements, while on the job.

Anna came in during our talk and explained some of the forms to Maria. Maria listens intently, a pleased expression on her face.

Comparing the Setting to the Pilot Project

My mind goes back to my repeated entry into the setting on a pilot project and how I saw both Anna and the agents interacting with Adel, the work education student, on a frequent basis. I asked her if this frequency of interaction and letting her in on agents' work happened in the same way before I came into the situation. Adel, had smiled and said, "No, I'm doing a lot more in the front now." I asked Adel if she was still getting her routine assigned duties completed. She replied in the affirmative. Now, remembering that this had been Adel's third round, I thought perhaps she was more efficient at getting these routine jobs done than she was in the first round. I am beginning to wonder what the underlying curriculum of this work station really is.

After this episode, I left the back room to talk briefly with Anna, asking her if she was happy with Maria's work. Anna told me that while Maria was thorough, she seemed to accomplish less in the time allotted than previous work education participants. I wondered if Anna was aware that Maria was confused about the use of the various forms. No, Anna was not aware of this. She was, however, very much aware of Maria's conflict with her parents over occupational choice and expressed her sympathy for her. I noted that Maria had not told me that she had expressed this conflict to Anna.

I returned to the back room, which I too, found depressing. I asked Maria if she had talked to Anna about the parental conflict. She seemed somewhat embarrassed, realizing that I must have been talking about her to Anna while in the outer office.

She said,

> Oh, yes, I did talk to her when I first came, but she does not talk to me much lately with all the short-staffing and other college student.

The agents seemed to take turns coming into the back room briefly while I was there. I wondered if they were sent there to check on me since the safe was also located here. I was standing right in front of the safe without realizing it. Maria said that it was normal for each employee to pop in and out but when it was not so busy they usually lingered to chat with Maria for a while. Now they don't have time. She is still not doing anything directly for any of the agents.

Researcher Experiences Role Conflict

My temptation to step out of the researcher role in order to help Maria out of the "back room" was great. I could see quite easily that Maria could unpack the brochures and take them to the unoccupied front counter, stamping them and sorting them for filing. She could also greet the clients as they came in, asking them to be seated if all the agents were busy. My ideas kept coming and I realized I was thinking of my own experience at my own work station. The urge to get her out was so overpowering, I left the setting quite suddenly, bidding adieu to Maria in the back office and all the agents and Anna in the front office.

Hidden Curriculum of the Work Station

In my chat with Anna I learned that she really believed that a student should be prepared to stay for two semesters for a total of 250 hours. She really did not want someone who did not intend to complete more than one 5-credit round of 125 hours. She was very much aware of the Cambridge program and had in fact written long letters of recommendation for the student I had observed earlier and also for another student who had come through the work education program. She informed me that both students were accepted into the program without any waiting period. I wondered if her hidden curriculum was this: Do the routine tasks in the back room well; your reward will be a letter of recommendation to the program. She intimated that the letter was often the deciding factor since more students qualified through high school averages than the number that could be accepted. I carefully alluded to showing the student what a travel agent really does by having her sit alongside helping in the tasks of a travel agent; seeing a booking from beginning to end, in an attempt to gain some understanding of the total picture. She vehemently replied,

> Definitely not in the first semester; I can't have my girls' time wasted by a student who is inexperienced. In the second semester some work would be done at the front.

I mentioned that one of the goals of students in the program was to find out just exactly what the job of the travel agent was like and that it might be difficult to determine that when the activities are confined to brochures and invoices. I trembled, wondering if I was outstaying my welcome. Anna replied,

> Well, I know if she is good travel agent material, by the end of the first round. I'll tell her. if she has done an excellent job in the back, then I'll bring her out for other work during the second semester.

Once again, I realized that the implication was that a serious contender would be in there for two semesters in order to get the coveted letter. She also told me that if the work education participant did a good job, she could pay her an honorarium of approximately $1.00 per hour. I was getting the impression that Anna did not consider it her responsibility to do any training beyond that which was given to the work education participant initially to enable her to stamp and file brochures and invoices.

Process of Exploration

Between the second and third interview, Maria was keeping a journal for me. She also worked diligently at identifying her interests, aptitudes and abilities at the back of the log book. She matched her good marks in accounting and an interest in that type of work to a possible occupational interest. Without having done any exploration of the occupation itself and actual admission requirements for education in the field, she said, "I've decided to go to Adelaide Institute of Technology and take accounting."

I knew that she had to write a letter showing an exploration of three places of business with her letter of application to Adelaide Institute of Technology. I offered to help arrange two interviews for her and suggested that she could then arrange the third on her own. She prepared a set of questions to ask, went for each interview and wrote a thank you letter to each employer. I became involved in this project with the full consent of Mrs. Durant, the work education coordinator. I told Maria that in arranging this for her and helping her with questions and letter, interview points and presentation, I was showing my appreciation for her participation in the research. She was very pleased with my help. Her visits produced the lively, effervescent Maria that I had met at the first interview. It was so good to hear the 'lilt' once again in her voice on the telephone.

Continued Parental Conflict with Choice

At the third interview, her last day at the travel agency, Maria was sure she would stay in accounting, but expressed concern about her father's criticism of her choice. Weeks earlier she thought he would approve because it was a "profession." Now he was objecting on the grounds of a lack of advertisements for accountants in the Adelaide Journal, whereas many ads for nurses appeared.

When I asked her how she had chosen accounting, she said, "Well I matched it with an interest and ability. I love to do accounting in school." She had gone to Adelaide Institute of Technology and Cambridge College, on my advice, to be a student for a day in one college and for the information session in the other. Neither college excited her. Since it was almost the end of the semester, she found it difficult to follow the instruction in the classes she attended. In the information seminar, she was impressed by the officer's warnings about homework and the competitiveness of the entry process. I gathered she was afraid in both cases: on the one hand, she was afraid she wouldn't be able to handle the course work; on the other hand, she wondered if she could even get accepted.

What helped her decide to "go for it" was her visit to an accountant's office that I had arranged for her. By chance two of the ladies in the office were graduates of Cambridge and had only been working for the firm for a short time. She spent a great deal of time with them and they managed to quiet her fears and inspire confidence. I noticed the glamor aspect resurfacing, as she described the office and surroundings, "a big picture window, beautiful desks, a cloak room for the coats, beautiful rug and real marble." I asked her if she would be discouraged if her first job was in a setting somewhat less opulent than this. She admitted she would be and then flashed, "There's no way I'd work in a back room like the one at McDonald's Travel, no way."

Career Exploration and Decision Making as a Process

I went on, did she realize that she might be in an office better than the hated "back room" but nevertheless less glamorous than the accounting office she just visited. She hung her head. Well, she didn't want to accept anything less. Then she looked at me and asked, "Well, could I try for a better job, later after I get some experience?" I sighed, "yes!"

I was sensing a turning point in Maria. She appeared to be beginning to allow herself to permit change instead of adhering to her father's admonition, "get one job and stick to it." I could see she wasn't completely comfortable with this value change, but I believed that with encouragement and time, she was on her way to realizing the process of career development. All of a sudden, she was getting another thought, "So, if I don't get the best job the first time, it's not the end of the world?" I replied, "No Maria, it's just part of your career pathway." I watched her shoulders relax. I thought about the years of carrying the burden of making the right marks, and trying to get what she considered to be a perfect job. No wonder it was producing such a trauma for her: she had regarded it as a once-in-a-lifetime choice. So, if she did not choose correctly, there were no more chances.

Modifying Job Preferences

It was interesting to note her change in preferences from the first interview when she stated that she liked to be busy in her work. After the experience at the travel agency, she now values the quiet office. Another pre-work education preference was a balance for working with people and things. At the travel agency she noted that having to do both could present stress for the agents. She expressed doubt at being able to balance the two commitments: paperwork and dealing with clients. Perhaps this is the reason she is happy with the lesser interaction with clients in a public accounting office. A hint of glamour or fantasy is still there when she describes her visit there.

> Oh, wow, is it ever a beautiful office, all oak and marble, big picture windows, and they took my coat to hang it up. I felt so important. Also everyone was so professionally dressed, not casual like the travel agency.

Insider vs. Outsider

In the second interview Maria stated her happiest work education day so far was spent at the home of Jean for a farewell party. She was made to feel at home. In the third interview, her happiest day has changed. During a day that Anna was away, Maria sat at Anna's desk in the front office, stamping brochures while talking to the agents. She stated they supported her in her decision to enter the accounting field and really encouraged her. Her journal records show that she was so pleased that they did not seem angry with her for rejecting the travel agent occupation.

Reflection on Impact of Work Station Experiences on Occupational Choice

When Maria is asked why she took work education in a travel agency even though she was aware the salaries were low, she admitted to a disregard for the money in favor of what she thought the job entailed.

> Then I said, who cares about the money, I just wanted the glory atmosphere of it, see other countries. I think that's the main thing, I wanted to get in there with just travelling and not the money and also with the people, basically.

Learning that Maria had definitely rejected the occupation of travel agent, I encouraged her to tell me how this had happened. First of all, her father told her that she wouldn't be able to live on the starting travel agent's salary. This comment prompted her to seek the views of Jean, a travel agent. She told her about the cost of rent, car payments, car insurance and other expenses and advised her that she wouldn't be able to afford moving away from home. Maria was drawn away also by what she perceived to be intense working conditions of the travel agency: constant deadlines and the pressure of having to balance the needs of talking to clients and doing all the work.

If she was working almost constantly in the back room away from the front office, I wondered how she was able to get a good reading of the agents' work. Even from the back room she stated that she found out about the pressure. Jean often came to the back room to get something and would share briefly the pressures of getting it all done.

I recalled my interview with Adel 18 months earlier in the pilot project. She too was busy making her occupational choice largely from the view of the back room. Adel remembered how she had hated doing the filing in the first semester and had decided not to stay on for a second semester. Her cousin told her about the interesting travel agent course at Grant MacEwan. Despite the discouraging context of the work station, she stayed on and eventually began getting involved in some agents' work. She told me that her happiest day was the day she actually did her first airline ticket. Once more I wondered if the saga of the back room might be broken if the participant was guided to more opportunities in the front office.

Maria further explained why she could not decide on the basis of facts she read or that were given to her by a guidance counselor.

> You have to see it before you believe it. You have to see the whole picture. . . . travel agent is not a glamorous life style. . . it's a hardworking thing.

Now Maria has developed more ideas of what working conditions she prefers. Perhaps the experience of working alone in a small, dimly lit windowless room has caused her to think about what conditions she does want. In the first interview, she couldn't really tell me what working conditions she wanted.

Interestingly, her description of an ideal job and the surroundings continues to hold a fantasy element which she has had for some time but did not share with me earlier. Although her main job will be as a supervisor in an accounting firm, with a large office, a big picture window, in a large building, she will also have a part-time job in fashion. She visualizes herself as a clothes designer with her own name-brand clothes, and her own brand of perfume, internationally renowned.

Elvis

Getting Acquainted

Elvis is in his first year of grade 12 and in his first year at Champion High School. He transferred here from a school in a small community about 30 kilometres away. While in Dearborn he lived with his mother. Now for the balance of his high school education he has moved in with his father who lives in the city of Adelaide (600,000 inhabitants). Since he was having difficulty in some of his subjects, even failing English 20, he wanted the change in order to get some "better teachers."

This is Elvis' first time living away from his mother since he was five years old when his parents were divorced. His mother has remarried but his father is still single. It is the first time his father is a full time guardian. The father works flexible hours, often being away from home in the evenings. Elvis must make supper on his own, something he rarely had to do when living with his mother.

While he was being interviewed by me for the first time, Elvis had a bad cold. I noticed myself exhorting him to take care of himself, "Get more rest" and other such "motherly" advice. He told me that I sound just like his mother. The look on his face seemed to say, "and I love it, keep it up."

Elvis seemed eager to be part of the research, saying that he thought "it would be fun." When I asked him about this expectation at the third interview, he smiled, paused and said, "Well not really fun, but it was good for me--I learned from it." I asked him if he had experienced discomfort with some of the questions. He replied that he did find some questions difficult to answer, but that he probably needed to be pushed. Then he hastily added, "It was ok because you're a nice person."

His original goal in applying for work education was to actually try out a tentative occupational choice in computers. One of the work stations available was a computer store called Next-to-New Computers. Mrs. Durant, work experience coordinator, offered this station to Elvis. Since he professed a love for and knowledge of at least one computer system, Mrs. Middleton, the owner of Next-to-New agreed to interview him.

Elvis was very pleased with the interview. Not only had he been accepted for work education, he was also offered a part-time job on a trial basis. His face glowed and his voice was deep, resonant and confident as he told me about his interview at Next-to-New.

> She said, 'I don't know how good you are, but I'm going to offer you the work experience and part-time work as well.' I thought, wow, she trusts me!

Elvis has had part-time summer jobs as a waiter in a restaurant and as a stock clerk in a warehouse. According to him he got along well in those jobs. Nevertheless he was very apprehensive when going to the work education interview. This was a position which needed skills which he had not mastered. Would it be too difficult for him, he wondered? There was no one at this work station to vouch for him. At the restaurant, the owner knew his mother; at the warehouse, his mother was also known since she worked in the office section of the company.

At school he was on his own. He had expressed some difficulty in school subjects. Although in the advanced diploma program, he is not experiencing overall success in school achievement. He does not enjoy going to school very much. "How can you relate to a physics equation?" he asks. Social Studies and English are difficult for him. Learning a lot of dates for events in the past does not make a lot of sense to him. Although his English composition is poor, he is hoping that he won't need to be an expert on literature in order to program or to sell computers.

In grade 7 Elvis was introduced to computers at school. His parents bought him a computer to work on at home. It was love at first sight. The love affair has continued to the present day. Elvis perceives his ability to learn computers a strength that he may be able to use in an occupation. He acknowledges the need of making the required grades in a variety of school subjects in order to qualify as an entrant to a post-secondary school.

Drowning in the Deep End

When I was interviewing in my pilot project, I found some of the complaints of work education students were about the lack of learning and challenge in their work. Among those students' employers there was a common perception of the student as an "extra pair of hands," not necessarily learning about an occupation that interests them. Elvis experienced the opposite extreme on the continuum of boring to challenging jobs. Early in the job setting (before the midpoint of the 125 hours) he was given a job to do that ordinarily an experienced salesman would be doing.

Before he started working at Next-to-New, Elvis was under the impression that he would be "starting at the bottom, like stocking the shelves and working my way up to sales clerk." What actually happened was a quicker progression to independent sales than Elvis ever anticipated.

Elvis was asked to install a computer in a business, using some easy-to-use software of his choosing. In doing so, he would also be expected to finalize the sale. No experienced staff would be there with him at the place of business. By his own account his directions on how to accomplish this task were a bare outline at best. The owner of the north side store of Next-to-New regarded it as a simple task for Elvis to do.

When Elvis arrived at the business, the supervisor asked him to go for coffee and asked him if he wanted to eat. Elvis was feeling very uncomfortable in this situation since he had never even met the man. In drawing a picture of this incident to me, Elvis said, "It was like getting in a car with a strange person, do you want to trust him?" The businessman asked Elvis many questions concerning the capability of the computer and a comparison to other machines. Elvis could not answer all his questions and was very unhappy. He told me, "I prefer to have someone with me when I'm learning, don't want to jump in on my own."

His use of the word "jump" reminded me of the drowning metaphor which I have used to describe his experience.

Although the situation just described was for Elvis the most dramatic example of "Drowning in the Deep End," Elvis was experiencing other requests to accomplish tasks for which he did not feel adequately prepared. He related an instance wherein Mrs. Middleton had asked him without any instruction to do the inventory on the computer with David. When he asked David, his immediate supervisor, how to do it, he discovered that David assumed Elvis had received instructions from Mrs. Middleton. Eventually, the misunderstanding was sorted out and Mrs. Middleton apologized for having asked Elvis to do something without instruction.

Much later into the work education time allotment, Elvis discovered that part of the reason he was not getting as much instruction as he would have wanted was the nature of the work education student who had been there the year prior. Elvis began to "put it all together" when he met Jim, who is presently attending a technical college. After spending some time with Jim, he realized how advanced Jim's expertise with computers might have been when he was in the same position as Elvis is in now. Since Jim could go ahead and actually make programs for the computer while engaging in work education last year, David and Mrs. Middleton had unconsciously expected the same behavior of Elvis.

Elvis was experiencing a feeling of satisfaction when he set up a computer system on his own at the store. He had to check it all out before the salesman delivered it to the client. He said,

> I was proud that I could do that . . . but I don't want to talk about something that —I don't know 'cause it makes me sound like a dumbell.

At midpoint, Elvis perceived unrealistic expectations were demanded of him.

> I think they expect a lot from me already. I don't know the store that well. David asked me what was on the floor, and I was lost . . .

During the second interview he was not pleased with the way his immediate supervisor David was managing him. He cited lack of adequate training, pushing Elvis to sell, and being inconsiderate of Elvis' leisure time as problematic. However during the third interview at the end of the 125 hours, Elvis had changed his opinion of the interaction between David and himself. When asked if he was getting appreciation at the work station, he readily conceded that he was being appreciated by David. He said,

> Yes, it's positive and negative, it's confidence. To myself it's negative in some ways, but to somebody else it's positive.

I asked him if David was getting more out of him in performance. Elvis replied, "Exactly. I hate to be pushed, but . . ." When I tried to validate the idea I was getting of Elvis, and asking him if he was a self-starter or one who waits for somebody to light a fire under him, he could not answer.

Incongruity of Participant Role Expectations

When asked how he would do things differently if he was the supervisor instead of David, he was quick to suggest,

> I'd look at the work education student as not knowing anything, I'd help him, giving the person more knowledge pricing on computers, parts of a computer, knowledge in writing programs. I'd seek my faults and fix them.

Elvis' recurrent theme throughout the duration of the experience at the work station was, "training before practice."

As Elvis' confidence in himself as a computer technologist and a salesman grew, he was able to understand how a lack of congruity between his expectations and those of his supervisors could arise. At the third interview, he was no longer threatened by the possibility of such misconceptions. He tried to be fair in his assessment of David's interaction with him. Lack of adequate training alongside was what Elvis was most unhappy with in his experience at the work station.

> I like somebody to be there to be around to help me, I don't like going to something that's totally new, that no one knows about. . . . I hate being on my own. I don't like it when I go to the computer and . . . I ask and he says, 'oh it's there, jjjam,' and he's gone and I'm saying what?

Rude Awakening

In the first interview, Elvis expressed an interest in sales and talked about how he enjoyed selling the most Black Forest cake when he was a waiter. When he got involved in sales at the computer company, he experienced what he termed the "crunch" of the competition in a free enterprise system. He said,

> I mean it hurts, you're just so mad, you get back to Mrs. Middleton and she says, 'We can't do that good' and then I know we've lost the sale. They could get a better deal elsewhere.

Terkel (1974) reports the agony of a car salesman coming to terms with dealing with the public in a competitive situation.

> I wish the public would realize that I'm a human being, too. You meet some guy at a party and its, 'Aw, you guys are all alike.' 'Watch out for him,' . . . Some of the customers are the real animals. All they do is make you eat your guts out. Then they'll go right down the street and they'll do it to another guy and they'll wonder: Is everybody a rat? And they're the rat.

Becoming a Team Player

Elvis' happiest day was described as follows:

> . . . we were working one Saturday, me and Al and the new guy. Mrs. Middleton had to go to the west end store. She came up behind me and she said, 'Oh, I trust you, you can look after the store while I'm gone' That was nice, that was from her, that was a nice boost.

He went on to explain that her comment meant that she wasn't worried about him in the store without her or the supervisor there to help or supervise. I asked him if he would identify that situation with a feeling of worth. He answered affirmatively.

Researcher Difficulty while Interviewing Elvis

Several times in the first two interviews Elvis found it impossible to answer my questions when I asked him to explain his experience through abstract terms. I asked him to talk about his interests, aptitudes, and abilities. He replied he was not sure. Then I broke it down into one concept at a time, giving illustrations. Occasionally I gave him a direct prompt in naming a concept he was describing. After telling me how he enjoyed selling the most Black Forest cakes in the restaurant, I asked, "Would you say that you like convincing people?" He said, "yes." If I had asked him the same question out of context I thought he would probably say he didn't know.

During the second interview we ran into another snag. I asked what were the positive and negative aspects of this experience to him. He once again answered that he was not sure. When I prompted him, he just looked more confused and said, "Hit me up with killer questions, it's like I don't know." I tried again, asking if he was gaining confidence in himself. It was all to no avail. I almost left that area of questioning completely but then decided to tell a story that illustrated what one other person experienced on the job. He listened intently, nodding his head as if he was agreeing with what was being said by the character in the situation I was describing. Almost immediately after I stopped to take a breath, he jumped in with his own story. Directly before the story I had asked, "Is there anything negative about it, something you're not pleased with?" Once again, he would not reply. Now he said,

> Yeah. You know quite a bit about Apple computers, enough that you feel comfortable but when they go on to things like modems, it's so difficult.

He revealed more about how "crunched" he felt. The negative aspect of his experience was having to deal with areas where he is not knowledgeable.

Reflecting on the problem of relating his experience to me I recalled that Elvis seemed to refer to instances within the group interview. In fact he referred to the group interview of his own volition without direct questioning more than any other participant in this study. I thought of how Elvis wanted to learn with someone else alongside and could not help wondering if this need related to his obvious pleasure with the interaction that took place in the group interview. He was so pleased to discover that other participants in the group were having some of the same kinds of experiences that he had. In fact after the group interview, he told me he was feeling rather good about his own experience and the way in which he was handling it.

Researcher Steps Alongside

During the process of analysis, I remembered Elvis' stated need to have someone alongside when he was learning and also his revelation of not wanting to be on his own. I realized that his need for more help and learning with someone could be linked to our experience during the interviews. When I asked him questions using abstract terms with which he was not immediately familiar, he hesitated to give any answer. Perhaps he hesitated in order to avoid feeling "dumb" or "crunched." When I stepped alongside of him telling of my own experiences as a waitress, he was able to open up about his impressions as a waiter. He was no longer on his own in the interview situation. In fact he would refer to an event in the restaurant, ending with "Well you've been there, you know how it is."

Gaining Entrance at the Work Station

In accordance with my research design, I tried to make an appointment to observe Elvis at the Next-to-New Computer Company. Of all the work stations that had agreed to be part of the research this one was the least cooperative. The owner was quick to point out that research was not going to put money in her pocket. If a client came in while I was talking to an employee, she wanted to make sure I stepped aside. Several dates were suggested before she finally agreed on a date that I could come. The day before the observation day, I called to remind her I would be coming. She sounded rather stressed, when she told me it was not a good day because she would be away. I told her that I was observing Elvis and asking other staff a few questions including his immediate supervisor; but would not need to consult with her. She seemed reluctant to say yes, adding, "Well I don't want David talking to you if a customer comes into the store." I assured her that I would be careful to limit my questions to periods when he was not with clients.

As it happened my experience at the work station turned out to be quite revealing. I could not have planned it better. Since Mrs. Middleton was not there I personally was more relaxed in observing and interviewing. Furthermore the store was not as busy with clients coming in and telephoning as it had been when I conducted a constantly interrupted interview with Mrs. Middleton.

At that interview, my first visit to the work station, I was relegated to the same position as the "junk mail" she was throwing out as she opened the company mail. She seemed determined to do several things at once: open mail, answer phone calls, speak to her staff who poked their heads in intermittently, and occasionally field one of my questions. She did not even afford me the courtesy of asking me to sit down when I was ushered into her office. Instead she looked up and said, "I don't really have time, you know, do you want me to sign something?" I had called in advance and made an appointment with her, prior to the interview. I assured her I had only a few questions and would make it as quick as possible.

During even that short interview, she allowed all sorts of interruptions without one "excuse me" or mention of these intrusions to me. She made it quite clear that she had no respect for research of any kind. Even though I tried to gain validity in her eyes by telling her briefly of my own background as a business owner, she seemed to lack interest and continue to regard me as someone to dispense with as quickly as possible. She did not attempt to introduce me to anyone even though they were right there in her office popping in while I was trying to talk to her. In fact she did not attempt to complete an answer before focusing on the person who had interrupted. Against that kind of backdrop, I was noticeably relieved that I would not have to contend with Mrs. Middleton during my observation.

The Setting

The Next-to-New Computer Company branch in which I was observing is located in a strip mall fronting a very busy artery on the south side of the city. The company has a sister location on the north side of the city as well. The inside of the rental space is divided into the front which is devoted to the store;

and two offices at the back for storing product, an owner's desk and work space, work space for the technician, and work space for the work education student. There is a wall between the two back offices; each has a doorway to the front store and a large window facing the front store windows, allowing some natural light to filter through.

The store front has large floor to ceiling windows and a glass door right across the front except for a narrow (about 3 to 4 feet) solid wall space on the other side of the door. On the outside a large sign proclaims the name of this company, highly visible by the thousands of cars that pass by each day. Each section of the interior space is well lighted by fluorescent lights. There is a durable carpet on the floor. The cash register and sales desk is at the back of the store front section and directly in front of the doorway to the owner's office.

On the two windowless walls at right angles to the windowed front, there are open shelves which hold an assortment of software, some used, some new. Running down the middle from the front to the cash register is a double-sided counter holding various computers and printers. A movable chair is on each side of the counter, presumably to allow clients to sit down and try out the equipment. There is also a bin (much like a department store cassette tape bin) full of used computer magazines. A large chart on the four foot wide wall next to the door depicts 166 facts you should know before you buy a computer.

The idea behind this retail store is a new one, Mrs. Middleton told me in the first interview. It was the first used computer store in Adelaide. Generally items are brought in for consignment or resale by private owners. Used computers are also purchased from a "middleman" who deals with large companies and institutions who are replacing old stock with more up-to-date equipment. Some lower cost new equipment is also available.

As I wander around the front of the store making notes, I am aware of David's watchful eye. I reassure him that I am merely writing a description of the setting in which Elvis is taking work education. Besides the store manager, David, there is a salesman, Fred, and a technician, Larry, working in the back office adjacent to the owner's office.

Elvis is working at his assigned computer in the owner's office. He has told me that he'll probably need to help David out front if it gets busy. I wonder if Mrs. Middleton has instructed everyone to make sure that my presence there does not interfere with the normal operation of the business. Elvis appears self-conscious about my observing him in a sales role. He says, "You'll probably see me telling people something I don't know anything about."

Elvis tries to explain to me the process of putting items off invoices into the computer memory, and then continues his work. I sit beside him, about four feet away, making notes, but also chatting. I'm mindful of his revelation to me of wanting to feel that someone is alongside when he is in a new experience. I therefore consciously try to draw him inside the situation of my observation, by talking with him. He seems to be more relaxed after I assure him that I am not evaluating him for a high school mark in the course.

Elvis periodically watches the store front through the window. He leaves his computer and tries to help a customer in front, who is unattended. The salesman, Fred, comes out of the back office and asks Elvis if he needs help. Elvis nods, and Fred does some explaining of product while Elvis stands by. Elvis progresses to the Apple II with the client and talks about it. I recall that this is the computer Elvis has at home and is most familiar with. Elvis makes a sale to this customer of some software. He appears at ease with the client. He has told me that he likes to sell only when he knows what he's talking about.

Yet, there does not seem to be an organized method of training Elvis in actual product knowledge. This is confirmed by his office manager, David. Basically Elvis tells me that he stands by while listening to the salesman or David or Mrs. Middleton. When I question him, he admits that no one has given him any idea of what to say to the client when he finds himself unable to answer questions. In short no one has given him a way to retain his dignity as a person. When he is talking to a client, then Fred comes out and talks, and it only makes him feel "dumb," he told me. One of the reasons he enjoys working in the back office is that he feels a sense of accomplishment and he "doesn't feel dumb."

During the observation, I saw Elvis answering the phone when other employees were busy. He seemed at ease in doing so. I heard the store manager, David, talking on Mrs. Middleton's phone to the north side store. He said, "I'll ask Elvis to go--he won't mind." Elvis is sitting an arm's length away, yet David does not pause to ask him if he will go. David has not asked me, either, if I need to get more information from Elvis. I recall Elvis' complaint about David's lack of consideration for him and I understand what he meant. Elvis apologizes to me that he has to leave and asks me if I have anything else to ask him because he is likely to be away for an hour or more.

After Elvis left, David told me not to mind him because he's got a bad cold. David was friendly to me when I came in. He invited me to walk around and do my observing. Entry to this location, I believe was considerably easier than I at first anticipated. There seemed to be a lull in customer traffic so I chose this opportunity to ask David some questions. He came back into Mrs. Middleton's office, sat at her desk, while I sat at the table next to Elvis' work center.

David told me that sales did not appeal to him when he completed his training at technical college. He wanted the job of systems analyst but when he couldn't get work for a year decided to take his present job. He said that the training college he attended did not have any formal sales training. Many of the college's graduates, however, found jobs in the computer sales sector. David thought it was better to learn sales on the job rather than at school. I then wondered just exactly how the learning was to take place on the job. David declined to answer, explaining that sales was the province of Mrs. Middleton. I wondered why Elvis had been telling me that David was pushing him into sales, not Mrs. Middleton. When I asked him if he was teaching Elvis how to sell, he told me that Mrs. Middleton was in charge of sales. This situation would be an interesting one to explore further with Elvis at the third interview.

In talking about his view of Elvis, he revealed his satisfaction with Elvis' work. He said, "I gave him some work to do and he did it 100%." He thought that the main goal of the work education program had to be experience gained by participants in the world of work.

The third interview with Elvis was conducted just after he had completed the 125 hours of work education. The firm had now hired him to work part-time Saturdays and some afternoons. From the very beginning of the interview I had a sense that this session was going to go along more smoothly than the previous ones. Elvis appeared to be an "insider" in the research process. He expressed a lot of satisfaction now with the work education program and the fact that it had been a stepping stone for him to a part-time job which he really enjoyed.

Coming back to the problematic area at the work education situation with David and discomfort in sales, I told Elvis that David had said sales was

Mrs. Middleton's responsibility. I wondered then why Elvis reported that David was pushing him into sales? I noticed that Elvis was answering without the slightest hesitation.

> It's Mrs. Middleton's responsibility. David's pointing in one direction and Mrs. Middleton's saying 'you are not ready yet.' So he says, 'sales, sales' and Mrs. Middleton's saying, 'wait.'

I wondered why he did not tell me this in the former interview. Elvis then admitted, "Yeah, I did not see that, like now that you're saying what David is saying, I see it."

As Elvis describes the difference in the roles of Mrs. Middleton and David, he says, "I went in there and I really did not know but now it's coming together for me, too." I had just told him that I was beginning to understand more of the meaning of work education after I had been in his setting. Once more he is responding well when he senses me "alongside."

Elvis told me that David pushed him into sales when Mrs. Middleton was not there. When I asked him why he thought this was happening, he said,

> I'm not sure, he's got a place but he does not really want to be there. He's found his place in the company but he wants to be some place else so he wants me to sort of fill his position, . . . he's more into books and programming.

Knowledge Instills Confidence and Allows Achievement

When asked if he's more motivated to go for it, he said yes. What is he getting out of work education?

> It's to know like I told you I did not know anything about IBM. Now people come in with spread sheets and I can show them. There was a guy from a radio station that called, and he said I need . . . and I told him basically what it was. I've learned the differences in machines. I feel more confident.

His assessment reminded me of my pilot project once again, where I heard variations of, "I can do *it*, it's easy."

Timing and Academic Uncertainty

In the third interview, Elvis reported that Mrs. Middleton had asked him to stay on as a part-time worker. She also suggested he get his advance diploma in high school through a second year of grade 12 and then take two years at a training institute. Elvis has decided to continue at school but to take a correspondence course as well. Then he wants to go to a technical college. If the college will take him without his advance diploma, he will not strive for the advance diploma. However, he still has not checked the requirements at the college of his choice. I recall that Elvis has hinted that he needs to be pushed.

Initially Elvis stated that he wanted a job where half of the time was spent with things and half with people. Now I'm asking whether he has changed his perspective. He says,

> It's like when you're having a good day and you make some sales, you like sales and you don't want to be in technical but if it's not a good day you just want to be back there and stick your hands in a machine. . . . well, I still have a year and half to decide . . .

Since he has decided that he will not finish his schooling in the first year of grade 12, there seems to be less urgency to make a decision.

His knowledge regarding educational and occupational opportunities in the field of computers was gained through hearsay and his work education at the Next-to-New Computer store. There seemed to be a reluctance on his part to get out there and find out on his own. He continued having problems with some school subjects and wondered if he would get the required marks in all subjects. In the last interview he said,

> I don't see anything wrong with staying in the field of computers, but if my marks aren't high enough to go to college right away, then I see no problem in working there part-time and coming back to school to upgrade.

I wondered if there's a built-in lack of urgency to come to a decision since a second year of grade 12 is now becoming a norm for a growing number of students.

Difference between Work Education and School

Elvis explains the difference between his experience in work education and school-based classes:

> This is like social and computers. It's something you enjoy and if you enjoy, you tend to learn. You don't learn because you go out to learn, you go out to see what it's like, to find out . . . it's good.

When asked he further explained that the latter part of his statement related to computer courses at school which he liked. He had related his dislike of social studies earlier. The choice of taking what you like, he was saying, meant that he was learning. In school he did not have that choice.

To probe this difference further I asked him to think of a subject at school and compare the learning there to what happens in work education and tell how it is different. Elvis said,

> I like gym because it's physical, not so much book work. It's learning with experience. You can't be part of a physics equation.

Elvis alluded to the problem of relating some school subjects to activities in the everyday world. When I asked him if he was saying that he liked kinds of things that can be applied and that he could be a part of, he replied by referring to another person's experience. He mentioned Maria's experience which she shared during the group interview. He said,

> I could tell she wasn't happy with the travel agent job . . . she read books on it, but it didn't connect . . . but when she was there she could see it firsthand. You can read all the books you want but there's nothing like the real thing . . . you can try to picture it, but it's not the same.

Elvis described how work education has helped him in his career choice process,

> I looked at myself, I thought, I like working with people. If you just went through school would you even know what it's like? Maybe I'd go to computer school and say, 'I don't want to be a technician for the rest of my life' but knowing there's different opportunities out there where you can do both sales and tech, that helps.

For Elvis the group interview at the school seemed to be very beneficial. He referred to the situations of other students which had been shared. He seemed to be able to understand his own experience when he heard the experiences of others.

Progress in Relationship Building at the Work Site

At the end of the 125 hours Elvis told me that things have changed between him and David. He said, "Me and David have no problem at all." I asked him if he thought the difference stemmed partly from his own increased confidence. He replied, "Yes, there are some people that are easy to reach, others it's slow, a little hard."

When asked whether he would like to sell computers in the store or to go out to the businesses to make presentations, he said, "Well I'd like to be able to go out to the company, because you'd get more feedback, have more of a relationship with the client." Although he wasn't ready for that kind of selling at that point, over time he realized that with more knowledge, he might like to do this, especially for the value of relationships.

In speaking of positive reinforcement, he heartily agreed that everyone needs more of it. Then he said, "I guess I have. She asked me to work here after work education." For Elvis the best form of positive reinforcement was getting a part-time job.

Hans

Getting Acquainted

Hans is in his first year of grade 12 at Champion High School. He is taking the advanced diploma program, completion of which will allow him entrance to most post-secondary institutions. He is very active in his church, participating musically and in teaching in the junior church program. Although this is his first formal participation in the work education program, he has helped a teacher friend in an elementary school in the music program. He enjoyed the latter experience with young children. His stated reasons for investigating the work education program were: to explore a general career interest in child psychology, and for credits. He had dropped one of his courses and wished to replace it with another course that would give him credits. The opportunity to work with children of an age level and a school setting similar to his previous experience in an elementary school attracted him to the work station of Rutherford Elementary School.

Uncertainty Over Occupational Choice

Participation in work education was not for the express purpose of trying out a specific occupational choice. In the first interview Hans identified the general field of child psychology as his vocational interest. He spoke of how interested he was in observing children at the elementary level learn. I questioned his occupational choice. He had identified the field of child psychology but was not consciously attempting to explore the occupation of teaching through work education. When I probed his vocational choice further, he just retreated into the general field of child psychology. He said he wished to learn more about why children act the way they do. He was hoping his position at the school would give him more experience in that area.

After his stated work preferences, I asked him if he was considering other occupation options. He then identified the occupation of "youth pastor." He had spoken to his pastor at the church to find out the education that was necessary to be qualified. He was able to communicate his job preferences without hesitation. His stated preferences were: the pay first; status or to be recognized; a job that you can feel good about yourself; a job where you can feel good about what you're doing in that job; it should be stable, not go bankrupt; good company; big firm or big organization; fairly happy, healthy environment, people should have a good attitude. After stating his preferences he said, "My general focus is to basically help people. I wouldn't mind being a youth leader or youth pastor."

Taking tentative choice of "youth pastor" and the job of elementary school teacher which he might be researching, I challenged him to match his preferences with each of these occupations. My questions were framed to guide him in the matching process and to reveal the mismatches. An example of such a question was, "Which occupation, youth pastor or elementary school teacher, does your preference in status match best?" He replied, "probably youth pastor." Then I challenged him about status within a certain organization as opposed to status in the broader community. Would the status of youth pastor be greater than that of elementary school teacher in the community at large? Within the church which occupation would receive greater status, youth pastor or elementary school teacher? To the first question, he replied after some thought, "Probably elementary school teacher greater in the community." To the second question, he readily replied, "Youth pastor within the church."

Hans could not match his first priority in preferences, that of pay. He did not have any idea of the pay of either occupation being discussed. During all my student interviews I found the lack of knowledge on remuneration of an occupation being researched or actually chosen to be typical. Hans expressed reluctance to ask anyone the level of pay, thinking that would be a personal question considered taboo. However, I mentioned that it would be possible to simply ask the range of pay from starting to a 10-year experience level without causing any embarrassment.

My interview questions were confrontational at times, trying to inspire him to look inside himself. At the first interview I was concerned that the hard-hitting approach might discourage him from taking part in the research. Fortunately, exactly the opposite was achieved: He was challenged to explore his own aptitudes, abilities, interests and job preferences. It seemed I had set the ball rolling. All through the research he was actively thinking, exploring and researching, eventually coming to an occupational decision and applying to a post-secondary institution for specific occupational training.

Meaning of Participation in Work Education

During the second interview, I tried to get at the meaning of "experience" for Hans when he said he was engaging in the program just for the "experience" beside the credits. He said,

> Yeah, it is experience, learning kid's behaviour. The experience itself . . . I talk to the students, try to communicate with them, learn to do things, or complete the projects which they give me by a deadline, just being able to think on your own of how they'd like it done, that is more of an "experience" part.

Even though Hans was not actively exploring teaching as an occupation, he perceived himself getting the experiences he originally set out to obtain. I asked him to expand on what he meant by "being able to think on your own." In reply he gave me an example,

> Mr. Long wanted a poster, to illustrate five rules for the kids. So, he gave me a paper and pencil and asked me to design one for him. So, I did that by the end of the class and handed it to him and he liked it. The next day, I outlined it in pencil, so there he wanted something done and he left it up to me as to how to do it.

Journal Keeping

I had asked Hans to keep a journal of his experiences at the work station. He gave me three fairly extensive entries, approximately three weeks apart. He was to hand one in at the final interview but admitted that he had lost interest in writing since he had made his occupational/educational decision. Generally, Hans' first two journal entries did not give me very much information on what he was actually doing in work education and how he perceived those experiences.

In Hans' first journal entry he described an incident that was happening in the classroom but which did not involve him. He seemed to be observing and evaluating Mr. Long's relationship with the class. Hans related his thought on what he would have done in a similar situation. His 'remedy' was clearly stated much like that of a psychologist answering a question in a newspaper column. I recalled Hans stated an overwhelming interest in child psychology.

On the reflections side of his entry he did not reflect on the incident he had described, rather he compared the world of the classroom teacher as he saw it and that of the business person as he visualized that world. He wished to avoid boredom. It seemed to him that the teacher's life must, by the nature of routine and restricted environment, be very boring. He found the material being taught to these elementary students of no interest. Now he was finding the material necessary to deal with in the field of marketing fascinated him. He was comparing the two situations and choosing the business world because "the scales fall on the business side because the materials I would use interest me."

In his second journal entry, completed about half-way into the course, he linked his preferences and abilities to his occupational choice in the world of business. He went on to mention what work education was doing: giving him the actual experience of working in a school. The experience would be of greater benefit to him, he stated, if he was actually given a chance to teach. Why? The greater benefit would be in the form of past work experience on his resume and also a reference.

After reading the second journal entry, I asked Hans to try to write more about incidents in work education and his reflection on his participation. His third entry was shorter but entirely devoted to the work education situation. He described his role in helping grade three's sign out library books. He called each one out by first name as he checked the card and stamped it. The reflection was once more along the lines of a psychologist talking of the importance of communication. Hans seemed to shy away from sharing with me what he was finding as he looked inside himself. He thought that the experience of noticing and talking with each student would help him in engaging in conversation with people in business.

Difference Between School and Work Education

Hans didn't really see the analogy of learning at school and learning at the workplace. He said,

> The supervisor isn't teaching me, I am more or less helping him out. In school they write things on the blackboard. You sit there and learn. In the work experience situation, you're applying what you've learned.

He affirmed that he was gaining more responsibility at work education than in a school situation.

When I asked him the difference in the learning, I received a surprising response. He said, "In work experience you learn what you want to learn, in school you learn what you're being taught." He further stated that in work education you learn through experience, a hands-on type of learning; whereas in school, learning was primarily through books. Another difference cited was feeling more like an adult in work education and more like a student in school.

At the outset Hans thought of school as being an education whereas work education was more of a job. I asked him to expand his ideas on work education as "not educational." He replied by telling me what he considered the principal's point of view who would probably look at work education as just a way of filling credits for a high school diploma.

> He wouldn't be looking at work education, Hans is learning from different people, how to cope and how to do things--he'd just be saying, 'he did that to get his credits.'

Probing further I discovered Hans thought of work education as educational or a way of learning but he did not think the school thought of it in that way. This revelation was particularly interesting to me since I had personally talked to the principal and found him to be overtly very supportive of the work education program. Also, the work experience coordinator, Mrs. Durant had informed me that the principal really believed in the value of work education to the students, and most particularly for vocational exploration. I wondered how Hans had got that impression of the principal's point of view.

Researcher Influence

A few weeks after the first interview, I telephoned Hans to arrange for picking up his first journal entry. He laughed nervously and apologized to me. He said he'd changed his mind about his occupational choice and that he probably wouldn't qualify for my research. He was not exploring the occupation of elementary school teacher; in fact he had decided to look into the field of marketing. This revelation represented quite a turn-around from his stated interest in child psychology.

I encouraged him to tell me how it all happened, thinking that some event or events during his work education had caused him to focus on another occupation. Instead he said, "Well it was those questions you asked at the first interview: you really got me thinking." My heart sank. Hans had been a very cooperative interviewee. Must I now lose him as a participant? Had I committed the researcher's unpardonable sin by allowing my influence to change the direction my participant was taking? I continued to talk to Hans on the phone with all the enthusiasm I could muster and suggested a meeting time at the school. I could hardly wait until the following morning to call my advisor to find out whether I would in fact have to drop Hans from my research. Imagine my relief when my advisor suggested that I continue my research relationship with Hans. He further suggested that I could be looking at what meaning that work education at Rutherford School held for Hans even though he was not exploring a career through his participation there.

In the second interview, I recalled my earlier telephone conversation with Hans. I now asked him to comment on his decision to explore marketing. He said,

> Yes, all the questions you asked me, like what was important to me, if I had enough status, etc. I hadn't thought about it before, then I began to look around what I'd like to do. So that's when I came up with the business part. I like business-like things.

He went on to say that he realized his interest in business while taking his social studies class. When he talked to his social studies teacher after class, he began to formulate an idea of vocational interest in marketing.

We discussed his stated job preferences of the first interview and how they relate to his new interest in business. Some of his preferences appeared not to match his new choice but he realized this and stated that he could achieve that interest outside of the job.

Hans appeared to be quite content in his activities at Rutherford although he did mourn the lack of enough teaching opportunities. In fact he admitted that he received more satisfaction from his part-time job at a retail store than he did from the work education. The reason for the greater satisfaction was because he was doing more important jobs at the store than at Rutherford. I recalled Hans' continual reference to status and the need to be in control. Could it be that in his role at Rutherford he perceived himself in a role somewhat lower than that of a part-time salesman at the store? There is some discrepancy here since Hans does perceive his work as a valuable aid to Mr. Long as well as the other two teachers he occasionally helps. He knows that the teachers do appreciate his work. Yes, he's aware that his work is useful and that he is really needed. Perhaps the retail job is also more satisfying because it is in the world of business, which Hans says he prefers.

Being in Control--Assuming Responsibility

The happiest day for Hans on the job was a day that his supervising teacher was away. A substitute teacher had taken over. According to Hans, he knew more about what the class was doing, so he assigned the activities for each of the grade 4 and 5 classes and left them with the substitute. He then took the grade 6 classes to the gymnasium and supervised their volleyball games. In describing this day he said, "I basically took control that day and knew what was going on and told the kids what to do." According to Hans the students seemed happy to accept him as a teacher.

He said he laid down the rules and they obeyed those rules.

Timing and Occupational Choice

When asked about how and why Hans was pinpointing his choice, he suggested that the fact he was in grade 12 was certainly a motivator. He further explained his occupational choice indecision,

> . . . in the beginning of grade 12 I was quite worried. Actually in grade 11 I was worried because I didn't know what I wanted to do after school and that sort of scared me.

Taking the Role of the Supervisor

Putting himself in the role of his supervising teacher, Hans would do some things differently. First of all he'd give the work education student all the opportunity that student wanted to have. He would ask the student what he wanted to do, then make arrangements to make it possible.

Hans thought he understood why Mr. Long was not giving him more opportunities to teach. He said,

> It's his first year there and he's pretty new at it, is in a rush right now, not too well organized, not prepared to do that.

I asked him whether the work that Mr. Long and other teachers assigned to him would get done if he was given more opportunities to teach. Hans thought that a compromise could have been reached so that one or two days a week he could get involved with teaching while the rest of the time he did the work of a teacher's aide.

I wondered about how some meaningful communication between Hans and his supervising teachers might have achieved the needs of both parties. I also wondered how that might have been achieved if the work experience coordinator was given the time to find out from each student just what was lacking in the relationship and then have the time to follow it up in a talk with the supervisor. My interviews were 45 minutes for the first two and 60 minutes for the last. It was not until the latter part of the second interview that Hans was able to clearly tell me what was missing in his expectations and how he thought it could have been alleviated.

Introduction to the Setting

Rutherford Elementary School is only blocks away from Champion High School. It is an older school situated in an older established area of the city.

This work station has cooperated in taking work education students from Champion High School in prior years. However, it is Mr. Long's first experience in working with a student in the program. Furthermore it is also his first year of teaching. When I made my initial visit to the school, I met the secretary, principal, and Mr. Long. All were very cordial to me and happy to be part of the program. They were all very encouraging to me in my research.

Incongruity of Student Role Expectations

I discovered that Mr. Long was never briefed on the actual aims of the work education program. The placement had been arranged by Mrs. Durant with the principal, who normally decided what teacher or teachers could use some help. Initially the matching with Mr. Long, a German bilingual class teacher, took place because Hans had some courses in German. Mr. Long told me he thought Hans would benefit in improving his German vocabulary. At no time did Hans even mention the German language use as a factor in the benefits of the experience.

Mr. Long viewed the program as beneficial to him in giving him a greater opportunity to teach while the extra clerical jobs got done by the student. Mr. Long's objective for the student was to work under authority and how to deal with it, to complete tasks correctly, learn to do things, learn interpersonal skills and interact with colleagues and employers. He thought that Hans would get a variety of experience within the school so that he finds out "what it is to be a teacher." When I heard the tone of voice and emphasis that he used in this latter statement, I wondered whether he really meant, "Just how much clerical work there is to being a teacher" since the overwhelming proportion of tasks he was assigning to Hans were clerical in nature.

Problem: What is Stated and What is Hidden

Although Mr. Long's stated intent was to give a variety of activities to give Hans an adequate view of what it is to be a "teacher" in effect 95% of the activities could be identified as those of a teaching aide. It is of course true that not all teachers are helped by a teaching aide. Therefore all those clerical jobs are part of that regular teacher's job. The principal of the school mourned the lack of funding which impeded him from hiring a teaching aide for Mr. Long. He recognized the extent of Mr. Long's teaching duties, the fact that he was a first year teacher and should have help. Since there was no money for a paid part-time aide, the principal was pleased to accept the services of a grade 12 student on a gratis basis.

When Mr. Long was telling me about his intent to provide a variety of experience to the work education student, he appeared stressed. He had just been in the job for a little more than a month and confessed that he had a hard time just keeping up with the work load. He was very appreciative of the help he was receiving from Hans in the clerical work: marking papers, and setting up assignments on the computer. He was doubtful that Hans could do much in the actual classroom teaching or interaction with students because his German was not good enough.

I could not help wondering if Mr. Long was finding that a great deal of being a teacher entailed clerical work. Was that what he meant when he emphatically stated . . . "a variety of activities so that he would find out what a teacher really does?" Was Mr. Long implying that what a teacher really does is something other than teach?

Observing in the Setting

Hans does a great deal of his work at the back of Mr. Long's bilingual German classroom. There are 22 students in this class ranging from grades 4, 5 and 6. There are 22 individual desks in the front half of the room. The teacher's desk is at the back of the room along and facing away from a side wall. Just behind that desk, facing to the wall is a computer and desk where Hans works when he is putting material on the computer. Hans' work centre is in the back of the room but it is not a separate room. He is in an excellent vantage point for observing all classroom activities while he works. The context of his work does not appear to place him completely outside the situation. However, since his activities do not place him in direct interaction with the students in Mr. Long's class very often, he perceives himself without as much control as he would like. He experienced more control when he taught a physical education class and gave instructions the day that Mr. Long was away.

Just across from those two desks is a table at which Hans sits when he's marking papers or recording marks in the marks book. The table is low to accommodate the size of the children in the classroom. Hans is about 5'10" yet he sits at this same table. There are several small chairs around the table. There is, however, a small adult-height table against the back wall. I took this table and moved it alongside Hans' table while I was observing and making notes. I had to take the teacher's chair away from his desk and sit at it since no more adult size chairs were available.

When Hans first came into the room, he waited for Mr. Long to give him work to do. Within approximately 15 minutes Hans is whisked away by another teacher, Mrs. Simpson, to work with her. She tells me he will be in the library in a few minutes and that I was welcome to join them there. After I finished writing up some observations, I walked over to the library and saw grade one students. Some were milling around, looking at books, while others were lining up to Hans at the librarian desk. Hans was all by himself there. There was no evidence of Mrs. Simpson looking over his shoulder. He checks each card against the book and signature, talks to them and helps them sign their books out.

The teacher is helping students by answering questions as they choose books. She takes time to tell me how much she appreciates the work education program, and what a god-send it has been to their school since they can't afford more paid teacher aides. She fervently hopes another student will be available the next semester. Even though I have identified myself as a graduate student doing research, I wonder if her comments aren't made to me as if I was evaluating the value of the work education program.

After this job is complete, Hans and I go back to

Mr. Long's room. He now works on the computer, typing lessons for Mr. Long's use. While we walked together Hans pointed out art samples on the hallway walls that he had helped put up. He says that he also helps in science experiments.

Exploration of Occupational Choice

In the third interview, Hans indicated that another benefit of the program was his realization of just how much work outside of school hours teaching involved. We talked about his exploration of various firms that hired marketing consultants. I had arranged interviews for him with four different types of firms.

I tried to link his work preferences of "being in control" and "professional" and asked when he was experiencing satisfaction in those areas at the work station. He told me he enjoyed being in control when he taught the physical education class, and also when he was completely responsible for making sure the grade ones signed out library cards properly. The "professional" feeling was there when he organized some of Mr. Long's work on the computer and put it on his desk. I asked Hans if he considered himself under-utilized in the work education situation. He said, "Yes, most of the time I caught up for the teachers: the computer work I did even got him ahead."

He further stated that he could have done more: could have engaged in actual teaching.

I asked him to tell me how work education was helping him in the process of looking at self as well as exploring educational and occupational opportunities. Hans admitted that he mistakenly did not examine himself in terms of occupational choice before choosing work education. He now thought the experience at the work station could have been a lot more beneficial to him if he had done that beforehand. Nevertheless through questioning of the first interview, Hans said he was challenged to consciously think about who he was, what he liked to do and what to aim for. "At work experience I did not like the repetitious work."

On Being an Insider

Hans thought it was important for a student to consider himself or herself an important part of the team,

> . . . or else it won't work. That has to be there. . . Once you're part of them you already have the feeling of an adult . . . There isn't the feeling of a 17-year-old student getting work experience.

He considered himself an insider although he did think he would have been more of an insider if given more teaching activities to do on his own.

Of school Hans remarked,

> You're just there in the classroom--the teacher does not recognize you as an individual . . . that 'in' feeling is gone.

I had not solicited this latter observation on the school situation. I wondered if Hans was now actively comparing the situation at the work station to the school since my question in the second interview about comparing learning in the two different situations.

I wondered what does work education mean to Hans now that he has completed it. He said,

> Learning I can get along with people, can handle noisy students that don't behave so well, handle responsibility, don't get depressed too easily, work hard and get things done quickly and satisfy most of the teachers.

Since these observations appeared to be very positive, I asked him if he thought he had achieved more confidence in himself. He replied that he had but hastily added that he was already reasonably confident. I wondered how Hans had grown personally through work education. He said,

> I've grown more through these interviews then I have through work experience by having been asked more questions about me. Work experience has shown me a few things but basically just confirmed what I already knew from earlier contact in a music class.

He went to on to suggest that one to one contact should be made available to high school students to help them in making occupational choices. Although he enjoyed participating in the group interview, he stated that he wouldn't have been able to open up as much as he had in the one to one interview.

Follow-up Interview

On the matter of "more important work" at the retail store, Hans said the difference probably was that there he worked more directly with clients who took his advice. Because he did not have as much direct contact with children as he did with paper work in the work station activities, he imagined he considered them less important.

I wondered why he did not ask for more opportunities to teach since that was an expressed interest. He now said that he realized Mr. Long was too busy. Hans thought it would be too much to ask Mr. Long to arrange the teaching for him, as he began to empathize with the heavy teaching load.

Mr. Long, on the other hand, when questioned, admitted that he was finding that a large portion of teaching activity was clerical. He did not realize that Hans wanted to teach more, but stated that while Hans' German was not good enough for the bilingual program, he could have released him occasionally to teach for another teacher in the same school. Mr. Long suggested that the work education student come prepared with a resume and a statement of what he expected to do while at the work station. It seems to me that the implementation of more two-way dialogue might minimize incongruency of role expectations as demonstrated in the situation just described.

Lyndel

Getting Acquainted

Lyndel is soft spoken, very pleasant, always portraying a cherubic smile. She is in her first year of grade 12 at Champion High School. She is now in Work Experience 25 or the second round of 125 hours. Her first round was completed in the previous school year.

Her mother works out of town during the week, coming home only on weekends. Her father is also away some of the time while looking after a hotel that he owns and that is situated some 50 kilometres away. Lyndel lives at home.

Lyndel's express purpose in engaging in work education is to explore occupational choice. She believes that this method of trying out a tentative choice is the most effective way of coming to a decision. She calls it an excellent learning situation. According to her, work education is also a way of avoiding costly post-secondary fees and time spent training for an occupation that turns out to be a wrong choice.

On Being an Outsider and The Meaning of "Extra Help"

Lyndel's first work education situation was in a hospital. She was in effect a part of the hospital volunteer group. She was there primarily to research a possible nursing occupational choice. However, she never really had a chance to observe a nurse in her duties with patients, much less actually engage in some nursing activities. In effect she was engaging only in activities that were described as normal volunteer duties. There was no distinction from the point of view of the hospital between a volunteer and a work education student in the type of activities in which she engaged. She perceived her role as a "go for." Nurses sent her on errands to get articles. She also served supper trays to patients, and talked to them when she had time. Whenever a nurse needed to work with a patient, Lyndel was told to leave. Whenever two nurses were discussing a patient's condition, she was also told to leave the room. She considered herself shut out from the mainstream of nursing activities. She said,

> I never really got to know what was going on. I was expecting to learn about nursing, the kind of things they do, following a nurse, but I was more or less there for the extra help.

Occupational Exploration as an Outsider

She did not consider the experience at the hospital work station much of a learning process. Yet, she did cite incidents which caused her to reject the occupation of nursing. She saw a patient getting a heart attack while she sat with her. During the time she waited for the nurse to come, Lyndel was frightened. When she thought about this incident later, she decided she didn't want the responsibility that she imagined the nurse had in dealing with the patient's heart attack. She realized that a doctor is not always as readily available as a nurse in an emergency. The nurses often had to take care of patients in a life and death situation when doctors were not immediately available. She recognized that nurses are on their feet a great deal of the time, are responsible for all the paperwork, and the medication.

Although she was rejecting this occupational choice, Lyndel claimed to have enjoyed the experience at the hospital. When asked how she received her enjoyment, she said it came from being appreciated by the patients. Every day as she passed out the meal trays to the patients, she said everyone was waiting and very appreciative. Her happiest day was one when she had made up several Easter baskets to be given to patients. Some of the patients saw them while she was making them. They expressed great joy at the prospect of receiving the baskets. The participant, Lyndel expressed satisfaction as an overall meaning of work education because of the reinforcement of self-worth from the patients.

When asked what she would have done different if she had been the supervisor in charge of the nursing unit she was assigned to, she said "give the student more opportunities to follow a nurse, watch, ask questions and maybe participate in some way as well." She did not however try to be more active in the process by actually asking the supervisor to give this opportunity. She stated that she was prepared to be more active in trying to be a part of the operation in her second work education.

The Second Station

The work station for her second experience in work education was an animal clinic. She chose it because she loves animals and thought she might like to work with them. In the first interview, Lyndel stated she expected to be involved in a variety of veterinarian assistant's duties. She says, "I don't want to be there just to clean or walk the dog." She feels confident that she will learn through this experience. While she was being interviewed for this position, a bird was brought in for treatment. Her supervisor allowed her to observe the bandaging and encouraged her to ask questions. Once more she emphasizes her concept of work education: "It is a learning experience."

Academic Uncertainty

At the very beginning of her participation, Lyndel was uncertain of being able to pursue her tentative choice in post-secondary training. Her high school marks were above the minimum required to enter the veterinarian technologist program. However, she recognized that higher marks were needed to get into training if there were more applicants than positions available in the program.

Becoming a Team Player

Priorities in work to Lyndel are relationships at work. She expects to be "treated with respect." In the second interview, Lyndel enthusiastically described her activities at the work station and the context within which she worked. She commented on the variety of activities she engaged in and identified as being very much part of the work of a veterinarian technologist. She appreciated being kept busy. She found the work interesting and perceived herself learning a great deal. If she took stool samples of the pets' fecals, for example, Mabel, her supervisor, always let her know what the outcome was. Most particularly she enjoyed the feeling of being valued. she said, "I like . . . and knowing that you're really helping the vet."

In contrast to her first work education when she saw herself as simply a "go for," here she found herself very much part of the team. She was being given an opportunity to engage in activities she enjoyed. She told of the way in which Mabel allowed her to hold the pets and work with the pets while she found herself something else to do. Generally she described herself working alongside Mabel or one of the vets. She was not relegated to an isolated corner or room. She was never asked to leave the room as she had been in the hospital work station. The kind of duties she ascribed to an "extra help" category, like cleaning cages, were only a small part of her many duties.

Building Relationships

Lyndel had identified "relationship with people on the job" as an important preference for her. Now she spoke with satisfaction of Mabel's relationship with her.

> Well, if Mabel wasn't there I think I'd find it quite hard. With the receptionist . . . she didn't talk much. Mabel laughs all the time and tells me stories to make the time go by fast. You feel more confident and comfortable around her when somebody's joking. . . . I've never seen her in a bad mood, always willing to help.

Perception of Being Valued by one's Superiors

Lyndel was definitely looking towards eventually working in the field of veterinary technologist. In contrast to the hospital situation where she had no direct contact with doctors and very little with nurses, at the clinic she said,

> They make it like you, well, the vets really make me feel at home, they don't look down at me, like you're just a kid.

Furthermore she said that the appreciation of her work made it a lot easier for her to engage in her activities as it caused her to feel better about herself.

Congruity of Role Expectations

Lyndel was pleased with the level of learning she perceived herself obtaining at the work station. She explained that staff were always very open with her about the animals. She never experienced a "shut-out" the way she did at the hospital. She did not have to try to force herself into an insider's position, since the expectations she had of her role at the work station seemed to match the expectations that the administrator, her immediate supervisor and the veterinarians had for her.

Difference Between School and Work Education

Lyndel thought she was learning more about working by actually experiencing it, than she would have through school subjects. In her own words, Lyndel was getting a lot more "fulfillment" at work education than she was at school. Her presence in work education was appreciated whereas in school it was taken for granted.

Influences Impacting Occupational Choice Process

Lyndel loved animals and enjoyed being with them and helping them get better. Since she perceived her duties of a veterinarian technologist as actually helping animals, she was choosing to pursue this occupation.

Lyndel had already explored the job of veterinarian technologist at a post-secondary school in

Adelaide. She claimed that she enjoyed the work and could see herself doing it. However, when I asked what her occupational choice was at midpoint, she replied that she did not know. Probing further I discovered her uncertainty of being able to achieve the academic qualifications necessary to enter the post-secondary training program was blocking a firm choice.

Gaining Access to the Setting

The Lansdown Animal Clinic is situated in a strip mall facing a busy artery. It is a considerable distance from Champion High School. The administrator, Mrs. Rajah, is the person who makes the decisions on whether to accept work education students. The clinic also cooperates in taking veterinarian students from a university and veterinarian assistant students from a technical school.

Mrs. Rajah's stated motives to take part in the high school work education program are to allow students an opportunity to try out a vocational choice; but also to obtain valuable volunteers for the clinic. Her view is that after an initial training period, 50% of the time the student is learning new tasks and 50% of the time accomplishing necessary unskilled tasks. In addition to the normal work education hours, Mrs. Rajah expects each trainee to put in five days of volunteer work, usually on Saturdays. She thought the aim of the school's work education program was to discover the aptitude of the child. She is a great believer in the value of work education to young people in making an occupational choice and hopes that her children, who are at present in elementary school, may someday be able to participate in the program.

The Setting of the Work Station

The animal clinic is located in a strip mall. As one enters, there is a waiting area and a receptionist desk with office files. It is a very pleasant atmosphere complete with rug on the floor, comfortable chairs, and colored vertical blinds on the windows. To the north of the waiting area there is a door that leads to the inner clinic. There is another reception area just inside this door, this time for the express purpose of initially examining animals that come in to be treated. Past that reception area is a spacious open area where the veterinarian assistant works with various utensils and machines; a closed room for operations; another room primarily for the bathing of dogs; then there are holding cages in an area back of these rooms where animals either await treatment or are recuperating.

Adjacent to the clinic is an animal "hotel," the upper class version of a kennel. Each of the dogs in the hotel has its own spacious cage. At the time I saw them they were being entertained by a video on their very own television set. The film was showing, "Nikki the Dancing Poodle." Mrs. Rajah explained that the "hotel" had become very popular and that expansion plans were being discussed.

Observing in the Setting

Lyndel occasionally works in the front office, filing and calling clients, and occasionally she works directly with the hospitalized animals, cleaning their cages Most of her activities according to her and also validated by her immediate supervisor, Mabel, are centered on day-to-day tasks normally performed by a veterinarian assistant. Mabel tells me that she is attempting to give Lyndel as great a variety of experiences as is possible. Since operations normally take place in the morning and Lyndel's work education time is in the afternoon, that is one observation she may have difficulty obtaining.

Mabel's assessment of Lyndel is positive: "She works well, she's easy to get along with and shows initiative." Mabel cites two of Lyndel's strengths: is responsible and has ability to work without allowing herself to be distracted.

I observe Lyndel cleaning and sterilizing utensils. There is an informal atmosphere here. The radio is on. Maria is getting together an order for needed supplies. She then asks Lyndel to actually put in the order by telephone.

A large panda dog has been brought into the animal reception area, and Mrs. Rajah has been called by her receptionist to inspect him. He is eventually brought in by the veterinarian and put on the examining table. Mrs. Rajah introduces me to the veterinarian and explains the nature of my visit to him. The vet asks Lyndel to hold the dog while he inspects him. Lyndel shows a lot of affection for the dog as she holds him. The vet cleans the dog's infected ear and tells her what he is doing. She asks the vet a question. He appears to answer with a great deal of respect for Lyndel, explaining patiently and thoroughly. It seems to me that Lyndel has a definite role within that organization and can readily identify herself as a valuable player on the team. My observation confirms what I have learned from Lyndel during the interview. The puzzlement came after the observation.

When I called Lyndel to set up a final interview, she told me that her hours had been cut and that she would be finishing later than planned. Mrs. Rajah, the administrator, had informed her that she would not be scheduled to come in on Wednesdays anymore. The clinic now had university students doing their practicum; and another high school student that was coming in Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Lyndel was greatly distressed by Mrs. Rajah's decision. She had wanted to finish the 125 hours before her end-of-semester January examinations. Although I suggested that she talk to Mrs. Rajah and voice her concern, she seemed very reluctant to do so. I called her a few times, trying to get a completion date but she was either ill, studying for exams, or writing exams. Finally in the middle of February into the second semester she still had not completed, and finally decided to stop the experience; opting for three credits instead of five credits. She had completed 106 hours. Just 19 hours or four more afternoons would have given her the five she had originally contracted to earn.

Although she did go in to the work station after she had been told that her hours per week had been cut, she did so only sporadically. She seemed to have lost her enthusiasm for participating. What she said was that she wanted to drop it because she had learned all she was going to learn. At the final interview, she was telling me that her supervisor, Mabel, was actively looking for another job because the pay was not high enough. Lyndel was pleased, however, because Mabel had suggested that they get together for coffee. She said, "Well at least she still wants to see me, so that's good. Guess I ended it on a positive note."

The Role of Communication

When Lyndel contacted Mrs. Rajah to indicate that she would not be coming back to complete the hours necessary for five credits, she also asked her why her hours had been cut. Mrs. Rajah thought she had done her a favor since Lyndel seemed to be absent because of illness or other commitments so often. Since another high school student was interested in being at the work site, and only one work education student is permitted at one time, she decided to give him the Wednesday that Lyndel had plus Thursday and Friday. Lyndel's hours were cut to Monday and Tuesday afternoons. Mrs. Rajah was hoping to improve Lyndel's attendance by cutting her hours.

I asked Lyndel if spreading out the hours, say Monday and Thursday might have helped in improving her attendance. She replied that it would have been better. If she had an exam on Wednesday she found it difficult to get her studying done since she had work education on Monday and Tuesday until 5:00 p.m. Also if she got sick Monday chances were she still was sick Tuesday, but by Thursday she might have been well enough to come in. At no time did Lyndel communicate this concern to Mrs. Rajah, nor did Mrs. Rajah encourage Lyndel to be part of the change, in suggesting the organization of the schedule to improve her attendance.

I was extremely interested in discussing this situation with Mrs. Rajah in the follow-up interview, however, she told me that she simply did not even have 15 minutes to spare because of a short-staffing situation at the time of the call. I asked her to call me back at her convenience, however, she did not do so.

Advantages of Participating in Work Education

Outside of vocational choice, Lyndel now cites other advantages. She thinks she has developed more as a person. She has learned to accept the need to put animals "to sleep." Now she is able to think about her own cat needing to be put to sleep eventually. Being able to accomplish all the tasks assigned by the veterinarian assistant and having a sense that she could handle the responsibilities of the job were positive outcomes to her. The relationship she formed with Mabel and the respect she received from the veterinarians was also a big plus for her. The vote of appreciation she continually received from Mabel and the vets made it more worthwhile. Lyndel recognizes the experience overall was a positive one, and she expressed satisfaction with the way in which it ended. After talking to Mrs. Rajah she was relieved with the outcome.

Timing and Occupational Choice

Lyndel regards the need to come back for a second year or at least one more semester to finish grade 12 a very strong possibility. That would mean she still has two and possibly three semesters of school in which to explore and decide her occupational choice, she says. She is considering the possibility of exploring in a different occupation, just in case she is not able to get into the veterinarian technologist program.

Perceiving she has time to decide, and dealing with the uncertainty of her academic standing and how it may impact her choice, seems to impede her "dream occupation" as well. When asked what occupation she would see herself doing five years from now, she simply said, "I don't know. There is so much to choose from. I'm not sure yet."

Follow-up Interview

Lyndel did not choose more experience in work education, opting rather to spend more time on her school-based subjects. She admits that if she had talked to Mrs. Rajah sooner, she might have finished the hours required for five credits. However, she concedes that "there are some people that are hard to talk to" and that Mrs. Rajah was one of those people. She does not blame Mrs. Rajah for the change, just wishes that the administrator had taken time to explain the reason for the change and had given her at least a part in how the hours would be cut.

She is elated after having received 86% in English last semester. However, she attributes most of that success to the teacher's style of teaching. Still having problems with Chemistry, she is looking into attending a junior college that teaches high school subjects. She admits that she is delaying her choice pending the outcome of her marks next year.

Harmony

Getting Acquainted

Harmony is a grade eleven student at Champion High School. She is the youngest in a family of three children. When she was nine years old, her parents were divorced. According to Harmony, she had to grow up fast because she needed to be there for her mother during that difficult time. She has an avid interest in people and pets, and professes to be a self-made "Ann Landers" of her time. She identifies her strongest aptitude as "giving advice."

Ever since she was five years old she has aspired to be a veterinarian because of her love of animals. Although she retains that interest, she is grappling with the conflict that she foresees between engaging in that occupation and her personal life priorities. She wants to be married and be a mother before she reaches the age of 25; if she goes to university for seven years to train for a veterinarian, she would be 25 before she had even had a chance to practice her profession. Furthermore she would like to stay home with her children until they start school. After they are in school, she would prefer to work part-time in order to have time for her family.

This is Harmony's first work education and she calls it her first job. However she does concede that she has experience in baby-sitting for a few years. Harmony is very articulate in answering my questions and in telling me about herself.

Conflict over Occupation Choice and Timing

In the first interview, Harmony said she would investigate the occupation of veterinarian if she could get that work station. I asked her why she was choosing that particular occupation when she already identified a severe conflict between what she assumed were the demands of this occupation and her personal life-style preferences. She said, . . ."Because I need to know. I want to know now and not wait until I'm out of school." However at the end of her work education experience which had been in a day-care, not in the animal clinic which she could not get, she really had not come to any decisions. She referred to timing, recognizing that she still had one and a half years before she left school and therefore plenty of time to explore and decide. She said, "Then at the beginning of grade 12, I'll say, 'what do you want to do?' I'll have a goal for myself."

In the first interview Harmony stated that she would be active in the exploring process if the people she worked with fostered her interest.

> If I can sense that they've got a hostile attitude, or that they're not very friendly, I'm not going to be as assertive. It all depends on the environment.

Why Take Work Education?

Harmony's first stated reason for enrolling in work education is to gain experience and to get a reference for a job. Another reason for her is to help her decide an occupational choice. She says, "It will help steer me in the direction I want to go." Harmony goes on to say that if she takes day-care she will find out how she relates to children and that the experience will help her when she has her own children.

Work Preferences

Harmony's work preferences are:

> Something you enjoy; slightly demanding, but not too overpowering on my needs; being able to help other people; being able to learn from what I'm doing, and use it for future reference; be in pleasant surroundings, not harsh or tense, reasonable hours, and work with people I can get along with.

She defines her understanding of what a job should mean to her,

> . . . should be something that I should be able to really enjoy doing, something I should look forward to everyday and realize that I'm doing this for myself and for other people . . . I should be full of energy, and have bright new ideas of what I am doing for the day.

Having listened to the steady flow of ideas, I wondered if there weren't a lot of myths in her preferences and if she might not be disillusioned in this experience at the work station.

Personal Preferences Influence Career Choice

In her second interview, I asked Harmony if she would like to work in day-care as a full time job. She replied that it depended on whether she got married and at what age she got married. However she could see herself working part time in the day-care if she decided to go to university. If she got married early and her kids were old enough to look after themselves, day-care would be a full-time job possibility. She continued talking about an entirely different occupation, that of esthetician, and of her wish to explore the field of various occupations more.

Insider vs. Outsider Perception

Since she said she enjoyed taking part in work education at the Mary Poppins Daycare, I asked her to tell me more about what she enjoyed. Her face lit up with a broad smile. Without hesitation she said,

> It's close, you don't feel like an outsider . . . they'll all talk to you, about my boyfriend. Kids come up and ask me questions.

Harmony perceived herself as a player on the team within the day-care. She was experiencing a valuing of herself from other people at the work station, both workers and children.

She further explained her enjoyment of the experience at the work station because she thought it was fun, and was not more than she could handle. She went on to describe a particular situation that may occur where some of the children are hyperactive and tend to get all the children in an unruly state. The reactions of children under those conditions and how she personally handled the group and individual children were graphically described.

Love is all it Takes

She also spoke of children who do not respond easily and gave an instance of how she was able to get through to an extremely shy child. She ended this episode with the following summation, "It's hard, but I usually can do it. I've got kids that adore me."

Relationships

So far her free association brought out only her relationships with the children, not with the other day-care workers. I asked her to tell me about her interaction with the supervisors. She did not describe a situation of interaction with the supervisors in the context of her day-care duties. Rather she talked about how they were planning on who to ask to be a Santa Claus for the children, and wondered if she knew someone who would do it for them. She seemed very pleased that she had been asked to help in this endeavor. I probed further asking what sort of training she had been receiving from the supervisors. She said,

> They tell me to do nothing. Well, I'd ask questions, found out where everything went, tried to learn kid's names. I help with crafts but basically it's just associating with kids, making sure they're happy, and if something goes wrong, knowing how to handle the situation.

Working Alongside

Harmony says that the supervisors basically do the same tasks she does except they keep track of parents' time and organize crafts for the next day. When asked about on the job activities she liked most, she replied, "everything." She would not change anything if she were the supervisor in this work station. She could not identify any one happiest day since she found every day a happy one. Just after this statement, she said, "I get hugs and kisses all the time."

Introduction to the Setting

The assistant administrator, Brenda, is the person who requests and interviews work education participants at the Mary Poppins Daycare. My initial interview with her went along very smoothly. She welcomed me warmly and led me to a deserted staff room directing me to sit on an over-stuffed sofa of the 1950's vintage. In fact all the furniture pieces looked as if they might be rejects from the adjacent public school staff room.

Brenda considered the work education situation a 50-50 benefit shared by student and school. The day-care needed extra help between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; students were usually available those times but probably would have difficulty getting work for just those hours. There was also the possibility that the work education student could get a paid job there after completing the work education hours. Her objectives for Harmony were: that she enjoy working with the children; she be responsible to the centre, she be loyal to the centre; and she get help during the experience if she needs it. The administrator was particularly enthusiastic about the program since she too had participated and benefited from a work education situation while she was in high school.

Observing in the Setting

Mary Poppins Daycare is in an older established area of the city. It is housed in a mobile type of unit which is attached to the main school. During the surging school enrolment years many established schools were authorized to add on to their space through portable units. This particular unit is now being used by the day-care. The facilities are trailer-like featuring long narrow hallways with rooms on either side. Furnishings and equipment are basic; certainly not up-to-date or state of the art.

There are groups of children in various rooms grouped according to age. Harmony is at a table with six children and Mabel, the supervisor of that room. It is craft time at the day-care. The children are busy making Christmas Cards. After that activity is complete, I move with Harmony to another room, now the age four's and five's. Here Harmony sits at a table that is not attended by a day-care worker. The children have elected to make up puzzles. She helps them individually whenever they need help. Harmony seems to be well accepted by these little youngsters. They speak quite freely with her. One girl decides to sit on Harmony's lap and gives her a big hug, then gets off and sits down in a chair at the table.

Janine, a supervisor in this room, tells me that Harmony is regarded much like a regular supervisor. Harmony is at the day-care while the children are engaging in coloring, puzzles or games. She simply goes to a table where the kids need some help in their activity. Children group themselves at a table according to the activity of their choice. The children at Harmony's table seem to have lost interest in the puzzles. Harmony uses her own initiative to draw a picture and invites children to guess what it is. As a child guesses correctly, she inscribes it to the child and gives it to her.

We move once again, this time back to the first room. The room now looks as if a mild hurricane has just struck. Harmony automatically begins picking up and putting things away. Some of the children try to help her. The supervisor does not instruct Harmony.

Harmony appears to be very much part of the group. In fact the children appear to accept her as another supervisor.

Harmony now starts putting some huge blocks away. In the midst of what seemed like a perfect situation, a crisis develops. A little girl decides she does not want the blocks put away. She wishes to continue playing with the blocks. She pulls a tantrum, shouting, 'no' and stamping her foot. When Harmony tries to explain the reason for putting the blocks away, the child only demonstrates more anger, by shouting "no" and hitting Harmony on the arm. The supervisor, Mabel, now intervenes. She walks over to the area and explains in a loud voice, that the blocks need to be put away so that no one gets hurt. Shauna does not accept that verdict with glee. Instead she walks away pouting, but nevertheless stops obstructing the activity. Now Mabel makes a game of putting the blocks away involving some of the other children.

Although the children appear to accept Harmony as another supervisor, there seem to be at least some situations where her authority is questioned. In fact it seemed that Mabel had said much the same thing that Harmony had yet with a different effect on Shauna. Harmony had not asked Mabel to intervene. However, since she was in the same room in another corner, she could not help but hear what was happening. She came to Harmony's rescue and Harmony just stepped back and observed while Mabel took over.

Harmony seemed to easily assimilate herself within another social group in the room by taking a large picture story book, sitting on the couch and reading it aloud. Even while she was settling down, a child was climbing up beside her. Eventually she had five children around, the smallest one on her lap. Although Mabel had intervened in the crisis, Harmony did not appear to be embarrassed or even at "loose ends" after the episode.

A second supervisor has entered the room to help with activities of the day's end. Jackie now asks Harmony to sweep the floor. After the cleanup has been completed, Harmony plays with some children in physical "rough housing." The supervisor voluntarily praises Harmony to me telling me that she is very mature in her reactions to the children.

Understanding the Concept of "Work"

I began the third interview by asking Harmony what she was enjoying about her work at the day-care. She replied, "I can't consider it work, because it's nothing I could really hate." She went on to describe the concept of work as lived by the people she knew. The description was generally negative. Work was drudgery. In contrast Harmony described her concept of the experience at the work station as it compared with her girl friend's part-time job in a specialty store, "I have a lot more fun in my job than she does in hers."

Work Education is Learning

Harmony perceived herself having a greater understanding of children through her experience as a day-care worker. Although she had learned about interaction with small children through baby-sitting, she had not experienced the effect of group dynamics on children. Harmony discovered the difference of one child's reactions,

> They've got two personalities: by themselves they might be very quiet but when they get with their friends they're completely different.

Harmony also spoke about learning about her own strengths through her participation at the work station. She said, "I find I'm always very aware . . . my attention never fully leaves the kids." She is able to be completely dedicated to the children's needs.

Since she worked with children of different ages, she found herself noting that children go through different stages of behaviour. She saw herself helping to shape their future in encouraging a positive outlook on life.

Difference between School and Work Education

Enjoyment. She enjoyed work and looked forward to it each day. It was relaxing to her compared to the pressure of assignments and exams at the school. Although there were days she did not look forward to school attendance, she said, "I'm never really dragging my feet to go to work. It is never really something I do not want to do."

Choice. The most salient outcome for her was simply the matter of choice. She said,

> Basically it was my choice to get into it, and if I found out I liked it. Whereas in school, you don't really have a choice whether or not you want to take anything, you have to take the courses and you've got to do well, so you go on because you need the courses to get into other schools. Whereas if I did not like this job, I could just ask for another one. It is my own choice.

It seemed to her that learning at school was imposed by the teacher. The teacher was in control, "explaining what you're supposed to know." At work the responsibility and choice of learning was within the participant she perceived,

> Whereas at work you've gotta sort of teach yourself and use your own discretion, what's right, what's wrong, what should I do, what should I not do?"

In the Driver's Seat. Harmony enjoyed being in control of her own learning. She said,

> I'm more in control of what I do than I am at school, because at school I can't say I'm not going to read this story, because I have to read it whether I want to or not. At work I make my own decisions.

She conceded however that she did do some things even if she did not wish to because of a duty to engage in that activity for the purpose of another person's welfare.

Usefulness. She identified utility and applicability to her future life as another factor which was more evident in the work station than in what was learned at school. Much of the material she was learning at school seemed to be only a prerequisite for entrance to the next school of learning.

Professional vs. Personal. Another contrast she presented was professional as opposed to personal. To her the school was preparing her professionally;

whereas the work station was fostering her personal growth.

Common Sense. At work Harmony uses more common sense than she does at school. Instead of learning from books, she's learning from all the human beings around her. Much of the learning is covert at the work station whereas at school it appears to be mostly overt.

To be Accepted is to be Loved

Earlier Harmony had said that every day was a happy day, and found it difficult to pinpoint one particular day or incident. When she had completed the work education I asked her once again if she could identify her happiest day. She cited an incident where she "was stampeded by about seven kids" as she was trying to leave the room. They all wanted to give her a hug good-bye and held on to her trying to prevent her from leaving. Then she went on to say, "it's little times like that when we get together and just sort of goof around." She further cited other happy times, "one will just want to be with me, so will sit on my lap, or grab my hand and want me to read a book, or say "teacher" . . ."

For Harmony the work station allowed her a feeling of acceptance for who she is. She said,

> When I'm working with younger kids, they accept you for who you are. They like you for who you are and they are not set on their own ways, all individuals, no strong ties to anything else.

She contrasted the acceptance at the work station to that of high school students who develop strong cliques and will not accept a person easily into their society.

Career Choice is a Process

The conflict of her occupational interest and her personal priorities continues to be an unresolved dilemma even after her experience at the work station. She does not, however, perceive the occupation of day-care worker in conflict with her home life preferences. However, she wonders if she will be challenged enough. The factor of timing interacts to cause her to set career decision-making on the shelf for the time being. After all, she does have a year and a half (she is in first semester of grade 11) to decide, she says. Other personal concerns appear to be interacting with her decision-making process: a stated intention to live on her own away from home; and a stated decision to live with her cousins in a neighboring province.

Follow-up Interview

Harmony is now employed by the Mary Poppins Daycare. She notes that she is now much more of an insider. She is being asked to staff meetings and her opinion is valued. However, this interview revealed a lack in the two-way communication during her experience in work education at the station. No one told her of added responsibilities expected of her when she became an employee until supervisors began complaining about her to the administrator. The administrator talked to her and discovered that Harmony was not aware of any change in her activities. Harmony was not pleased to be told "after the fact." In speaking with the administrator I discovered the reason that there was a difference. Apparently during the work education time period the day-care was fully staffed and did not need Harmony to take on any more responsibility.

Researcher Reflection

I found the origins of a student receiving a partial picture of the occupation rather interesting. On the one hand a student participant who is in a situation of short-staffing could find herself not getting the "full picture"; but on the other hand a participant in a situation of full-staffing could also experience a lack in the full range of activities, albeit for different reasons. Pondering over this recent connection in my data gathering and analysis, I wondered if there could ever be any predictability of fulfillment of expectations which are based on individual circumstances at the work station. Should we as educators warn participants not to expect too much to prevent disillusionment?

My mind quickly brought me back to the issue of dialogue. Is it just possible that at least some of these incongruencies might be mediated if not completely resolved by more dialogue both at the school and the work station? Perhaps we will be challenged to discover the answer to that question for ourselves. It is interesting to note here that the three representatives of work stations who participated in the follow-up interview all asked that the school be involved with them more by being at the station in person more often and by speaking with them face to face in order to improve the education that takes place.

CHAPTER V

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate the pattern of themes both common and unique to the participants. The five case studies presented in the preceding chapter described five high school students' subjective experiences as participants in a work station. Within the context of each particular work setting, each story highlights the uniqueness of each person's experience and the various meanings ascribed through the individual's perceptions. These experiences are at the same time linked by themes common to more than one participant. A structural pattern is formed which contributes to a greater understanding of just what it means to have lived the experience of a participant in a work station while participating in a high school work education program.

Owens and Owens (1981) studied 4,000 students in thirty high school experiential programs. The factors which students reported as contributing most to gains in social and personal responsibility were: discussed experience with teachers, did things myself instead of observing, adult did not criticize me or my work, had adult responsibilities, developed personal relationship with someone on site, had freedom to explore my own interests, discussed experience with family and friends, felt I made a contribution, had a variety of tasks, got help when I needed it, and had challenging tasks. In the study of five cases herein reported there is some similarity of the following themes with the experiences reported in Owens' study: Learning in the driver's seat similar to: "doing things myself instead of observing" as well as "had freedom to explore my own interests;" acquiring a sense of achievement similar to: "felt I had made a contribution," as well as "had challenging tasks;" becoming a team player similar to: "had adult responsibilities," as well as "a variety of tasks;" building relationships similar to: "developed personal relationship with someone on site."

Another quantitative study, this one completed at the University of Alberta by Germscheid (1982) determined the frequency with which student perceptions of positive factors associated with experiences in work education were reported. "Prepares for school learning," a factor that referred to allowing career exploration, and helping to get a job as well as learning about careers was reported with highest frequency; the factor with the next highest frequency was, "interpersonal relations." Others were mentioned much less frequently. In the study herein being reported, by far the largest number of themes of experiences within the work station related to "exploring self and others." What my qualitative study seeks to do is to draw a more comprehensive picture of just what each case is perceiving in "interpersonal relations" and "career exploration" in order to come to a better understanding of the meanings ascribed to those experiences which may be named in this way.

The themes within the general theme of "exploring self" were not necessarily stable meanings throughout the life of the study for each participant. For example, "Doing time in the back room" was a stable theme for Maria throughout the duration of her first 125 hours at a work station. However, in her second work station, she reported in the follow-up interview that the "back room" effect was largely minimized. There was an open door to her work centre and there was a great deal of interaction with other employees, as well as help from her supervisor. For Elvis, "Drowning in the deep end" was a major theme in the first and second interview and during the observation. However, by the third interview, at the end of the 125 hours and also in the final telephone interview after Elvis had been working part-time at the work station, there was no evidence of that theme. Elvis now felt confident in the duties that were assigned to him, and reported on his pleasure through achievement and knowledge gained. He looked back on the traumatic incident of selling and installing a computer early in the experience and perceived it as a "growing experience" since it "had turned out O.K." and he realized that he could do it, after all.

Participants appeared to explore their own awareness of self in terms of attitudes, values, needs, aptitudes, abilities and interests. Experiences took on different meanings by the participants as time at the work station wore on; or as they spent time in another work station or as employees at the same work station.

Exploring Self and Others (In the Context of the Work Station)

Doing Time in the Back Room

The theme of the "back room" emerged quite forcefully for Maria. She referred to the "back room" with distress all through her 125-hour experience as well as in the follow-up telephone interview more than four months later. The position of the participant's work space was only one aspect of the meaning of

"Doing Time in the Back Room." For Maria the meaning was broken down into the following aspects: too small to move around; too dark to see properly; the door had to be closed at all times, adding to the isolated and closed-in feeling; the room was closed off from the co-workers and supervisor; the co-workers and supervisors did not do any of their work in the back room, although occasionally they popped in for a coffee or to find a form; it was dramatically incongruent with her expectations of working alongside one of the agents or the supervisor in the front office where all the interaction with clients occurred.

In the follow-up telephone interview, Maria talked of her second work education station in a drafting office. In this case, she was once again in a back office. However, the door was open. The room was much bigger and had a desk for her to sit at. There was more movement in and out of that office by other staff and therefore opportunity for communication. Her immediate supervisor came into the back room to help her and talk to her quite often. Although she would still prefer to be with the other workers in the main office, she did not find this particular location at the second work station to be as distressing as the one at the travel agency.

Elvis was situated in a back office as well. However, he shared this large office with the owner of the business who hid no business transactions from him. In his case, the back office location of his work centre meant that he was very much "in" the situation rather than isolated. The back office he worked in was the epicenter of activity for the business; all important decisions were made there and he was privy to all that went on.

The "back office" theme denotes meanings of utter isolation and being shut-out, both meanings contributing to the perception of the role of an "outsider." This theme did not exhibit itself for Lyndel who worked alongside her immediate supervisor in the animal clinic; nor for Harmony who also worked in the same room as her immediate supervisors in the day-care.

Although Hans' work centre was at the back of the classroom, he was not separated by walls and could quite easily observe the teacher and was surrounded by students when they did special projects at his table. The position of the workstation did not necessarily produce the "back room" effect.

Drowning in the Deep End

Some students were expected to perform tasks independently without adequate instruction and support. For Elvis, this theme was quite pronounced through the first and second interviews and during the observation. However, his perception of himself at the work station had changed considerably by the third interview and the follow-up telephone interview. The trauma of having to sell and install a computer on his own without enough instruction, as well as other experiences where his immediate supervisor did not adequately train or explain what was to be done was readily reported by Elvis.

Elvis experienced the distress of these situations most keenly because of the incongruency between his expectations of his role in the work station and the station's expectations. When he was interviewed initially, he expected to "start at the bottom, putting out stock and doing some computer work" before he would be expected to work directly with clients.

Elvis expected to be learning a great deal at the work station. He also expressed a need to learn "alongside" another person, not on his own. It was not until the third interview that he had "figured out what was happening." The owner and supervisor had expected him to be able to work on his own without much instruction because the work education student, who had preceded him, had been able to operate with minimal instruction. Once Elvis had met that person and visited with him in his home, he realized what had happened.

Communication plays a large part in the meanings ascribed. At this particular work station, the owner exhibited a stressed, over-worked and rushed kind of stance. The supervisor reported that he was not in charge of training the work education student. Elvis found it difficult to communicate the need for more instructional time alongside the owner or the supervisor. Initially Elvis reported that neither the owner nor the supervisor spent too much time in assessing Elvis' abilities nor making sure that he understood the assignments given to him. Eventually, however, he was able to voice his needs to them and also interact with other employees at the work station who had not been originally assigned to give him tasks.

Maria also had some experience with "Drowning in the Deep End." Once again, lack of adequate training and communication reported by Maria seemed to contribute to her feeling of confusion and inadequacy in doing the tasks assigned. She, also, was too timid to ask for more help. Instead, she pretended she knew what was wanted when her supervisor assigned the tasks. She intimated that she has had trouble understanding instructions all through her school life, but often did not indicate this to teachers for fear of appearing "stupid." She got by because her friends would explain the assignments to her after class. At the work station she did not feel brave about asking anyone.

The supervisor reported that she expected Maria knew what she was doing since the other work education students before her had not required more instructions. Anna did not check on Maria since she had very little time due to a short-staffing situation much of the time Maria was at the station. However, she did not think Maria was encountering any problems with what she termed, "simple stamping and filing jobs." During the follow-up interview, Anna reported that Maria's lack of understanding and consequent misfiling of many documents showed up during an audit after Maria had left the work station.

Anna now reported a great deal of disillusionment with the school's work education program. She thought it was the school's responsibility to screen the students before assigning them. She stated quite vehemently that she was not about to do the teaching for the school. "Drowning in Deep End" did not emerge for the other participant students.

Discovering a Sense of Achievement

Elvis was experiencing a feeling of satisfaction when he set up a computer system on his own at the store. At the third interview, Elvis was counting the experience of having to sell and install a computer as a point of achievement. He did not relish the experience at the time it had occurred, but now in retrospect, he was proud of himself for having "pulled it off" after all. By the third interview Elvis claimed that sense of achievement was his most salient meaning of work education:

> It's to know, like I told you. I did not know anything about IBM. Now people come in with spread sheets and I can show them. There was a guy from the radio station that called, and he said, 'I need . . .' and I told him basically what it was. I've learned the differences in machines. I feel more confident.

Lyndel reported a powerful sense of achievement in her role at the work station. Further she reported that she could not see any activity that the veterinarian technologist was doing which she herself could not do given the training. Her sense of achievement was coming from the feedback she was receiving from the veterinarians as well as the technologist. They communicated to her that she was doing the job well.

Hans identified achievement as an important meaning of the activities he engaged in. He said he was learning that he could get things done on time for the instructors and that he could work on his own when necessary. To Hans this facility of doing was "professionalism" which had been also identified as a work preference when I questioned him on what he wanted to get from an occupation.

Harmony talked about achievement in the context of building relationships with the children. She discovered that, although it was difficult, she could draw out a shy child, and arrange the situation differently so that children would share their toys with each other. She also discovered an ability to get the attention of the children.

As I heard the theme of achievement emerge, I recalled my pilot project when I interviewed several students in three different schools. Many of the students I interviewed at that time were considered non-academic by the schools. Over and over again, I heard this theme of achievement. With wonder and sparkle in their eyes, they uttered variations of, "I like it, I can do it's easy." Since many of these students had a history of difficulty with achievement in school subjects, I had begun to assume that I would not see this theme in the same way with students, who were in the advanced diploma program, and who had already achieved above-average marks during their school lives.

One of the students I interviewed at Champion High School during the pilot project, was in the International Baccalaureate Program. I was told that his I.Q. was the highest of all the students in the school at that time. He was doing work education in accounting at a financial institution in order to test a tentative occupational choice. Imagine my surprise, when he too, began giving me instances of why he enjoyed engaging in work education. He, too, was saying, "I like it, I can do it's easy."

Maria did not sense any achievement at her work station. In fact, she continually alluded to the lack of learning in her experience. I did not realize fully what she meant by that statement, except for the lack of experiencing the full scope of what a travel agent does. Later when I spoke to the travel agency manager in the follow-up interview, I discovered that she had indeed not learned, as was evidenced in the errors she had made in filing of various records. Instead of perceiving achievement, Maria spoke continuously of being confused.

Becoming a Team Player

Being accepted as a valuable member of the company or organization where one is participating in work education was identified as a significant meaning in the exploration of self and others.

Lyndel found herself very much of a team player, part of the animal clinic staff. She was working alongside the veterinarian technologist, sharing the tasks that the technologist normally did instead of just "extra jobs" that she had experienced in the hospital. The veterinarians she reported, explained what was happening to the animals as they treated them and asked her to help them. She perceived Mabel, the technologist, giving her a chance to be a team player by finding other things to do while Lyndel was actively helping the vets.

Once Mabel had modelled and watched over Lyndel in doing some task, she allowed Mabel to do it on her own, giving her full trust and responsibility. There was no shut-out feeling for Lyndel ~~in~~ the way there had been at the hospital work station. She further identified the respect with which the vets treated her so that she did not feel like a 17-year-old student or "just a kid."

Hans was becoming a team player by completing projects that were used by the instructors and that would normally be accomplished by a teacher's aide. One of the ways he identified himself as a team player is that teachers depended on him and occasionally allowed him to think on his own. Children accepting his authority also contributed to a feeling of being a team player. The interaction he was receiving from the teachers and from the children was giving him the perception that he was respected as an adult, not just a 17-year-old student.

Harmony was experiencing the team player concept very early into her experience and throughout the 125 hours. She attributed this theme to the interaction she had with the children. She perceived herself doing most of what a paid day-care worker was doing since she was working with the children alongside the day-care workers in the same room. She felt that she was assuming the role of a day-care worker almost completely. She perceived the children accepting her just as they did any other day-care worker. The supervisors asked her advice on how to get a Santa Claus for their Christmas party. She considered this experience as a further example of the team player concept.

During the follow-up interview, however, Harmony's perception had altered. She reported that she is not always treated as a full member of the team. For instance, some day-care workers insisted that they could not even go to the bathroom, thereby leaving her alone with the children, all because she did not have certifiable training.

Maria never attributed the meaning of team player to any of her experiences at the work station. In fact she felt "shut out" most of the time. Two experiences, however, caused her to feel a part of the staff at the travel agency. Jean suggested Maria sit at Anna's desk to do her stamping and filing while Anna was away. Now Maria was in the outer office alongside the employees and clients. She reported that co-workers talked with her, and she could observe all that went on in that busy office. Another instance Maria reported was when she was invited with the employees to a farewell party at one employee's home.

Elvis perceived himself as a team player early in his experience since he was given activities that regular employees did and was privy to all that went on through his work center location. In fact he would have been quite happy to "sit out on the bench for some of the innings" but he was continually placed on the playing field.

In the follow-up interview he suggested that a work education student should wear a tag designated "trainee" so that clients would not expect as much of him as a regular employee. It seemed that he would have appreciated less involvement as a team player.

Learning in the Driver's Seat

Per Dalin (1983) contends that schools can no longer assume a knowledge dissemination role in isolation from the community. Dalin states,

> Schools will continue to exist as institutions that can bring the complex world together by helping people to explore themselves and the world in which they live.

When students compared the meaning of school-based learning and learning at the work station some rather interesting themes came to light. The major one was simply the matter of "choice." Students perceived the choice to take work education or not; also the choice within the program as to which station to choose; also the choice of trying out another station if the first one was not acceptable to them. Furthermore, they perceived choice in what they were learning while in work education; in some instances they identified this choice as taking or having control over what they learn.

Taking all these sub-themes, I termed it, "Learning in the Driver's Seat." All students responded without hesitation to the question of the difference between school and work education to give me the notion of choice. This concept seemed to be universal in their assessment of the difference. For others the element of control, a somewhat stronger connotation than choice was identified.

Hans identified "being in control" one of his career preferences. When asked to describe his happiest day during the experience, he responded with an incident that happened while Mr. Long was away. Hans was able to take the students to the gymnasium and supervise a volleyball game. He reported that the students respected him as a teacher. Furthermore, he perceived himself as choosing what he learns while on the job, although at school he did not have any measure of control or choice over what he was learning through school subjects. When he goes to school, he said, he gets the feeling, that "I have to go;" when he goes to the work station, he gets the feeling, that "I want to go."

Maria could sense a difference in school-based learning and work education-based learning when I asked her during the first interview (before she had begun work at the station). She, too, identified the element of choice, of being able to choose which place one wants to explore for an occupation. While participating in work education, however, Maria found it difficult to see the differences in learning, because in fact, she was perceiving that she had not learned through the experience except to learn that she did not want to pursue that particular occupation.

Lyndel also identified the element of choice as a difference in the learning at school and in work education. She particularly enjoyed the choice of station where she would be able to see first-hand what an occupation was like. She perceived learning at school was more forced learning rather than personal choice. She also alluded to the notion of participatory learning while at the work station. "You're learning on your own." She found that the vets and the technologist were making it possible for her to learn. Learning was an important aspect of the work education. At school she found that the teachers did not always make it possible for her to learn. "The more I see the more I learn."

Elvis also identified the element of choice as a distinguishing feature of learning through work education as opposed to school-based subjects.

> It's something you enjoy and if you enjoy, you tend to learn. You don't learn because you go out to learn, you go out to see what it's like . . . it's good.

He further explained that the subjects he was taking in school were not always the ones he would choose. He simply had to take them if he wanted to gain entrance to post-secondary training for his chosen occupation.

For Harmony the element of control over her learning was identified with learning in the driver's seat. She said,

> I'm more in control of what I do at the day-care than when I am at school, because at school I can't say I'm not going to read this story, because I have to read it whether I want to or not. At work I make my own decisions.

Building Relationships

Reaching out for affiliation, understanding and personal need fulfillment emerged more for some students than for others.

For Harmony this was a predominant theme. She identified times when the children showed her their affection or needed to be with her as the happiest times at the work site. She noted how quickly she had been accepted by the children at that age. She contrasted this acceptance with the difficulty of acceptance in a high school. Senior high students tended to group themselves in closed cliques, she stated. Relationships at work were for her primarily with the children.

Hans thought that one advantage of being a teacher might be that children might come back to visit you one day to let you know how well they were doing. On the job he said,

> I don't mind photocopying because I get a chance to talk to the secretary or whoever wanders in there . . . you're not too rushed, . . . you can go at a pace where you like it, you can talk to students once in a while who come to you for help.

In work education Hans perceived himself as gaining an opportunity to form relationships with other individuals in the setting.

Elvis talked about wanting to go out to make a presentation to a company as his work preference. He said, "I'd like to go out to the company, because you'd get more of a feedback, more of a relationship with the client." When he got an opportunity to visit a former work education student at his home in order to discuss computer-related topics, he was ecstatic. This student, who had worked at Next-to-New Computers the year previous, encouraged Elvis to "hang in there."

Maria's happiest day on the job was identified as one where she was invited to a farewell party for one of the employees at the work station. Her journal reveals how much she craved relationships,

> Everybody at the front was having a good time with customers, and employees were having a chit chat, but in the back room I am just doing my work diligently without any conversation.

An entry some weeks later shows a marked change. She reports,

> I had a great feeling inside because everyone was all cheery. Doing my work made me feel happy . . . Anna talked to me about her daughter. I said 'hello' and everyone said, 'hi' back to me.

Still later, she shares some new-found knowledge,

> I felt it would be boring if Anna and Jean will not be there. I was wrong. I became acquainted with Sheila. She complemented me . . . She gave me some advice on men. I liked that.

Maria's search for relationships through her experience at the work station was clearly explicated in the third interview when she talked about her experience exploring an accounting office.

> Where I went, you associate with those you work with, . . . it's really working as a group, friendship and I like that.

Lyndel voiced her satisfaction with the

relationship she had with Mabel and the vets. "Mabel always says, 'thank you' and how much she appreciates." In the last interview Lyndel seemed quite pleased that Mabel had asked her if she would like to go out with her one evening. She said she was experiencing satisfaction at having ended the work education on a "good note" as evidenced by Mabel wanting to see her socially.

Perception of Role: Insider vs. Outsider

A common meaning to all five cases and one which emerged without direct questioning was the perception of the participant's role within the organization. This understanding is mediated by all the other meanings he or she ascribes to what is being experienced. Each sub-theme of meaning (Drowning in the Deep End, Doing Time in the Back Room, Discovering a Sense of Achievement, Becoming a Team Player, Learning in the Driver's Seat and Building Relationships) contributes to either the outsider or insider perception. Hans, Elvis, Harmony and Lyndel considered themselves "insiders" more than "outsiders" whereas Maria identified more with the "outsider" role. Nevertheless all experienced both "insider" and "outsider" meanings while at their individual work station. The degree of participant's role from the point of "outsider" to "insider" varied to a certain extent as time progressed; through dialogue with supervisor or co-workers; and as his or her perception changed.

What is the saliency of being "on the inside?" For all five cases an "insider" was very much integrated into the mainstream of the activities of the work station. For some (Maria, Lyndel, and Elvis) this integration was extended into the social activities of the employees of the work station.

Learning and working "alongside" other employees in the regular context of the work centre at the work station was another determinant of being "on the inside." Elvis worked in the owner's office, which was the hub of all communication to and from employees, clients and suppliers. Hans worked at the back of the classroom but in full view and hearing of his teacher/supervisor and all the children. He also worked in the school library, again within a few feet of the teacher but seated at the library desk, helping grade one students to sign out cards. Lyndel worked in the very same work centre allotted to the veterinarian technologist in close proximity to the technologist, as well as the veterinarians. Harmony worked with children in the day-care just a table away from a regular day-care worker, who was also her supervisor.

Maria, alone, was primarily shut-out from the mainstream, and perceived herself as "an outsider." The one day the manager was away she was allowed to sit at the manager's desk and interacted verbally with employees while she did her work. That was her happiest day on the job: for once she was "on the inside."

Another factor of saliency was the perception of being treated as an adult instead of a teenage student. Hans said,

> Once you're part of them you already have the feeling of an adult. There isn't the feeling you're a 17-year-old student getting work experience.

Lyndel spoke of the way in which the veterinarians interacted with her on the job,

> They treat you with so much respect, not like a 17-year-old student. They don't talk down to you. They don't make you feel stupid.

Harmony perceived herself as an adult because of the freedom she had in interacting with the children at the day-care. She stated she made her own decisions. Her help was solicited by staff when they were discussing having a Santa Claus for the children's Christmas Party. Elvis recognized himself as an adult at the work education through the assignments that he was expected to complete with only minimal explanation and supervision.

Being an "insider" also means being valued for your opinion and for the work you are performing. Lyndel frequently made reference to being appreciated by the technologist and the veterinarians. Harmony was pleased that her supervisors had requested her opinion on whether they should get a Santa Claus for the children's Christmas Party.

An "insider" experiences affirmative two-way communication at the work station. Lyndel was told how much she was appreciated and she was asked for her opinion. Maria reported her happiest day the one when she sat at the manager's desk talking to other employees who affirmed her vocational choice and encouraged her to talk about her fears. Elvis was pleased with the interaction he had with the technician who taught him about the technical side of the computer and encouraged him to ask questions. Harmony found the two-way communication between herself and the children most gratifying. Hans also reported significant satisfaction with the two-way communication between himself and the young children in the library.

What is the saliency of being an "outsider?"

Being an "outsider" means being isolated in the following ways: in the context of the work centre; from supervisor and/or co-worker interaction; or from the mainstream of the activities at the work station. An "outsider" could be experiencing one, two or all three elements of isolation.

Hans considered himself an "outsider" to a certain extent during the first two interviews since he was isolated from participating in any teaching assignments. Harmony considered herself an outsider since she was not to be left alone in the room with the children. She interpreted this practice as a lack of respect for her abilities and achievements with the children. Elvis considered himself an "outsider" with David during the period that respect for Elvis' personal needs were not shown. David did not ask Elvis if he could stay an hour longer; simply assumed that he would do it. Lyndel perceived herself becoming an "outsider" when she was told her hours were cut and that another work education student would be taking those hours. There appeared to be a lack of a reciprocal communication and lack of respect for her needs in that the administrator did not ask her if the arrangement was suitable within her timetable.

Maria perceived herself an "outsider" much of the time in her work station. First of all she was isolated in the work centre context from the main activities of the travel agency. She also described a lack of two-way communication between herself and the supervisors and the employees, both about her work and about her own personal career choice. She needed more help and supervision yet was shut away from adequate aid, particularly during the time of short-staffing at the agency. She conveyed lack of control over her situation and inability to penetrate the barriers between herself and the work station team.

Exploring Career Opportunities
(Within the Context of the Work Station)

Introduction

The largest number of common themes to explicate the meanings of the experiences to the students in the work station were found under the general rubric of Exploring Self and Others. The general theme of Exploring Career Opportunities, although reported less frequently, also represented a significant element of meaning.

Within the work station, career alternatives were explored. All participants perceived a congruent or incongruent situation regarding their expectations of their role in the work station and that expected by work station personnel. The more congruent the expectations the more satisfaction the participant seemed to report with the experience. Each participant had a myth or myths about the occupation of the work station.

Bursting the Occupational Myth Bubble

All students had some preconceived ideas about work in general and also about the particular occupation they were about to explore. These notions constituted a myth that was dispelled through their participation at the work station. Not always was the resolution of myth and fact traumatic. Sorting out reality from fantasy through the experience at the work station was, however, always acknowledged by the students as a very valuable learning tool.

Elvis in referring to what work education meant to him said, "If you didn't have a chance to see for yourself, to try out, how would you really know?"

Maria's occupational myth about a travel agent was the most fanciful of all the reported myths of each case. The most salient element in her myth was the one that had attracted her to the job when her mother suggested it to her: opportunity for international travel. She assumed that a large part of the job was actual travel and she saw it as a very glamorous role. While at the work station, even from the back room view, she was able to apprehend a very different picture. There was a lot of paper work, a lot of deadlines, and having to balance working with clients with just getting all the details done in time.

What really burst the bubble for her was discovering that one of the agents had to cancel her own agency-paid trip to the Bahamas because the office was short-staffed. Maria's disillusionment over what she expected the job of travel agent entailed and what was actually expressed to her by the individual agents was rather traumatic. With tears in her eyes and a quavering voice she conceded,

> . . . Travel Agents not what people think it is, not glamorous life style. It's a hard-working thing.

Elvis' view of sales in the computer store was framed by his past experience as a waiter who endeavored to "sell" desserts to his clients. He never realized the scope of the competitiveness in the business world and how it would impact him as a salesman. He explains,

> We had this system set up . . . the guy wanted to know if we could do a better deal. They could get a better deal elsewhere. . . . and Mrs. Middleton says, 'we can't do that good' . . . I mean it hurts, you're just so mad . . . I mean it frustrates you, this was a $3,000 deal!

With less impact, but nevertheless of consequence, other participants also found their occupational myths incongruent with reality. Hans had always assumed that the job of an elementary school teacher would not be too taxing since the subject matter at the lower levels could not be too difficult. He realized while in the work station how complex a teacher's job really is regardless of the level of students that he or she teaches.

Lyndel was amazed at the comparatively low salary that the animal clinic was paying a technologist. In her first work education at a hospital, she was surprised at the amount of responsibility a nurse really had. She had assumed that the nurses were mainly secretaries for the doctors. When she saw that a nurse had to deal with a patient's heart attack without the aid of a doctor who was not available, she became frightened of that kind of responsibility.

Congruent vs. Incongruent Role Expectations

For all students there was a realization of varied degrees of congruence and incongruence between their own role expectations and that expected of them by the work station personnel. The point on the continuum between incongruent and congruent was not necessarily static through the life of the study for each participant. As circumstances changed and a student's own perceptions of his or her role became clearer, the point between congruence and incongruence was adapted to fit the altered situation.

Maria suffered a severe incongruency between her role expectations and that of her work station supervisor. She had expected to be working alongside an agent in the front office, talking to clients about travel. Instead she was shut out from the front working on her own in the back room, stamping and filing. Incongruence was primarily in the areas of: work centre away from the mainstream of the agency; communication to and from agency personnel; and type and variety of activities assigned to the work education student. In a follow-up interview Maria reported a greater congruency at her second work station, an accounting situation in a drafting office.

Elvis' expectations of his role in the work station were related in his first interview:

> . . . I guess I am going to be a salesman, but to start off with, I'm going to start at the bottom, work my way up, like stocking the shelves. They have IBM there and that will broaden my view. I can find out how they work.

He thought he would learn a great deal about different computers and software while gradually taking on more advanced kind of activities.

Elsewhere in this paper, under the theme of "Drowning in the Deep End" is a dramatic example of what happened and what his response was to the drastic incongruence of role expectations of the work site to his own. However, by the third interview, the point had moved considerably closer to the congruence indice from incongruence. Perhaps a variety of factors had mediated this perception: his own increased confidence, more help from staff and simply a better perception of his role. He was not actually able to identify the reason for the change in his perception of the congruency scale.

Lyndel's initial expectations of her role at the work station of the animal clinic seemed to match those that the administrator and technologist had for her very well. She said she had been prepared to be more active in asking to change her role if it was not as congruent as she wished. However, that was not necessary according to the first and second interviews. She reported great satisfaction with the experience.

The third interview with her uncovered an incongruency situation. Lyndel expected that an employer should respect an employee's personal life and schedules. She related an experience she had in a previous part-time job where her employer had simply expected her to work every weekend until 10:00 p.m. during the summer without asking her if it suited her needs. Now, she stated that Mrs. Rajah, the administrator, simply came to her in a rush and told her that her hours would be cut. Another work education student would be taking over some of her hours. She was not asked to participate in the change or whether it suited her timetable.

From that day forward, Lyndel appeared to find many reasons for which to skip going to the work station. She eventually terminated the experience, accepting three credits instead of five credits because she had not completed the 125 hours.

Harmony. Within the first three interviews Harmony reported a completely congruent situation. There was no problem whatsoever and she said she had experienced no surprises. However, in the follow-up interview, three months after she had completed work education and was now a part-time employee in the setting, she reported an incongruency. She felt that she was not accorded the respect that she deserved both during the work education and now as a paid employee. First of all she was never invited to the staff meetings until she became a paid employee; secondly she was not left alone with children in a room at any time. The explanation given by staff for this behaviour was that she was not a certifiably trained employee. She, however, perceived herself as a proved, responsible and valuable employee. Now she reported a move towards incongruency from the total congruency that had been her perception in earlier interviews.

Hans initially found his expectations were completely congruent with that of the work station. In time the congruency changed because he discovered that he wanted to teach at least some of the time. This activity was not, however, part of the work station's plans for him. He then expressed some dissatisfaction with the experience.

Hans took on the responsibility for the incongruence, stating that he should have taken the time to realize what he wanted out of the experience and asked for it when he was initially interviewed. During the latter part of his time in the work station he realized how busy Mr. Long was; in fact became empathetic with his complexity of commitments. Hans settled down into his role of teacher aide quite comfortably and enjoyed the experience. Now he was reporting a complete congruence with his role expectations and that of the work station.

Within this study students seemed to report more satisfaction the greater the congruency of their role expectations with that of the work station. The congruency vs. incongruency theme emerged almost universally whenever I asked the question, "What would you change in the interaction between the supervisor and the work education student if you were the supervisor?"

Outside Influences

Introduction

While in the setting of the work station, experiences outside the work station were reported as part of the Exploration of Self and Career Opportunities. Greenhaus (1983) studied the impact of career exploration on the career decision-making process of college students. He found that participation in occupational exploration was related to year in school, self esteem and age; self exploration was related to year in school; the most extensively used exploration activity (family and friends) was not related to development of a decision or clarity of values or knowledge of chosen career.

These quantitative results appear to underscore the complexity of the career choice process with the possibility of countless variables impacting and interacting to either impede or advance decision-making. His findings relating to occupational and self exploration seem to be supported in the theme of "timing" discussed in this section. Timing relating to proximity to school graduation was reported by participants as a significant impetus for the career exploration process.

Academic Uncertainty

All five cases were enrolled in the advanced diploma program, which when successfully completed would provide them with post-secondary school entrance. Yet, each of the five participants spoke of how uncertainty over academic achievement tended to impede progress in the vocational choice process.

Hans reported only a small measure of concern over his achievement in school subjects. He had, however, dropped Chemistry, recognizing that he was not likely to get a mark high enough for university entrance. In exploring self he recognized what his job preferences would be. Exploring four different businesses for a marketing occupation through personal interview, he discovered that the job he wanted required a university degree. He decided to "go for it" by applying to a technical school two-year program that transferred to a University program, providing the averages achieved were 80% or better. Having charted his course, he reported a concentrated study schedule to try for higher marks and therefore assure entrance.

Elvis is concerned about two subjects: English and Social Studies. He had moved to Adelaide to stay with his father so that he could go to a big city school in the hopes of getting "better teachers" and therefore higher achievement. Unfortunately the move had not produced the desired results. He was achieving passing grades, but reported that they probably were not high enough to assure entrance to post-secondary training.

Although his experience at the work station is confirming his interest in computers, he is not exploring various post-secondary institutions for computer training. He admits that his academic achievement will help him to decide. Since he is in the first year of grade 12, he later reported that he can always go back for another year to get the required course while continuing to work part time at the Next-to-New Computer Company. Academic uncertainty for him appears to mean a "wait and see" stance rather than continuing the process of vocational choice.

Lyndel had a problem in getting high marks in Chemistry. She knew she could get the minimum required by the training program for veterinarian technologist. What concerned her was if others who applied had higher marks, they would be accepted ahead of her. She spoke of how much she enjoyed work education at the animal clinic and how she could see herself engaging in that kind of work. Nevertheless she avoided making a career decision because of her concern over academic achievement.

In the third interview she shyly spoke of her problems,

> I'm having trouble with the sciences--such a hard time, gets really depressing. But if I can . . . I still want to try for veterinarian technologist. Especially it's good to get work experience and see what it's like. That way you know what you're working for.

In a follow-up interview Lyndel was jubilant over her recent high marks in English. She was now exploring the possibility of attending a private college to complete her advanced diploma. Perhaps a change of school and teachers would help her to achieve the higher marks she needed in the sciences, she reasoned.

Maria appeared to have an unusually unhealthy dose of academic uncertainty. According to her this element interacted with high parental expectations to cause her great distress. She spoke of making low marks in some subjects, repeating them at summer school to gain prerequisite for the next level; then going through the same process the following summer. She was now in her second year of grade 12. Although she found mathematics easy, she found English 30 a constant struggle. Although she was advised to take English 33, she chose English 30 in order to obtain university entrance. The follow-up interview revealed that she had failed English 30 and was now toying with the idea of taking it over again in summer school. I wondered why she would not take English 33 instead. She replied that her friend was going to take English 30 at summer school and could help her.

Academic uncertainty caused her grave concerns about her occupational choice but she seemed to be refusing to admit defeat, opting rather to keep taking and retaking courses to get the extra marks needed to pass or get the required average.

Harmony's overt responses did not dwell on academic uncertainty until the third interview when she was comparing school learning to learning on the job. She did not identify it as a difficulty, rather a dislike of certain subjects and therefore low achievements. She had problems in learning a foreign language. Although she did consider attending university either for vocational reasons or simply for the "experience", she realized that her marks may not gain her entrance.

Parental Expectations

There may have been an element of parental expectations that impacted each case, but four did not report any parental expectations with regard to career choice. For Maria, however, this element was by far the most powerful influence in her occupational choice process. According to her account, her father was pressuring her to take prerequisite courses for and eventually train for a nurse. Her academic achievement was not high enough for entrance into nurses' training. She was advised by her father to repeat high school courses to get higher marks, in keeping with the requirements of nurses' training. She was struggling to fulfill her parental expectations but having difficulty in doing so.

When her mother offered her a different choice, that of travel agent, she jumped at that opportunity since it appeared to have lower entrance requirements. She was not really exploring her own abilities, interests, and aptitudes before her participation in the work education and the research. In the first interview she appeared to be simply taking her parental wishes as her own without looking inside herself. Through the first and second interviews I tried to challenge her to be open to exploration and to look inside herself. Through her journal entries she was communicating her search of self. She was finding that neither nursing nor travel agent occupations were suited to her abilities and interests.

Through this self-examination and the experiences at the work station, she also expressed a great amount of turmoil because of her father's continued insistence that she stick with "nursing" and "work harder" for her school subjects. She enrolled in English 30 even after teachers advised her to take the diploma course English 33. She failed English 30, yet told me of her intention of taking English 30 again in Summer School even though she already knew she did not need English 30 for entrance into the post-secondary accounting program she had now chosen. She told her father that she had chosen accounting by matching her abilities, interests, and aptitudes to an occupation's requirements. Her father's comment was,

> Look at the Adelaide Journal, there's no jobs in accounting, only nursing. How are you going to get a job when you graduate?

Individuals at the work stations (both the one I researched and the one she was in during the follow-up interview) mediated the effects of her conflict with her father. In the travel agency, two co-workers and the manager reportedly talked to her during the last part of her work education time, encouraging her to continue in her choice of accounting even though her father disapproved. Now in her second work station where she was engaged in bookkeeping tasks, she was getting more affirmation of her choice. She had applied to a post-secondary institution for entrance into a two-year accounting program, and was provisionally accepted depending on the outcome of her final marks.

In the follow-up interview she related the problem as she was seeing it at that moment. She is a middle child in a family of five children. The first two children have disappointed their father's aspirations for them, having not achieved a "professional" standing in their occupations. Now her father was putting even more pressure on her to make sure she did not miss that goal. She further stated that her older sister had applied to a post-secondary institution but had not been accepted. Maria perceived her ability to learn as somewhat less efficient than that of her sister.

She said she had to spend a lot more time studying and achieved lower marks. She wondered why her father now expected her to achieve what even her sister had failed to do. Nevertheless she was determined to try.

Timing

Each of the five cases spoke of the proximity to high school graduation interacting with their participation in their own career choice process.

In Maria's case, she was relating an urgency to come to closure in the choice process since she was already in her second year of grade 12. During the first interview she spoke of not having any more time for exploration: she was taking part in work education in a travel agency because she had already decided to take that choice.

Hans who was in his first and last year of grade 12, spoke of being motivated to make a choice because of the time. He knew that he needed to make application to post-secondary institutions by the beginning of the second semester of that school year. Although he said he had been worried in grade 11 because he really did not know what to do, motivation to really "go for it" in the career choice process did not happen until the first semester of grade 12. He said, "It's simply that I got myself motivated to do something." When asked what motivated him, he replied, "Time."

Lyndel was in her first year of grade 12 but intended to come back for at least one semester to finish her courses towards an advanced diploma. She stated that she would wait until she knew what all her marks were before she came to any decision-making regarding an occupational choice. Nevertheless she had explored both through work education (two separate work stations) and also by finding out requirements at a post-secondary institution for one of the occupations she was exploring.

Elvis was also in his first year of grade 12 with the intention of coming back for another year. He, too, stated that he still had time to decide depending on his achievements in his final subjects. He did not even explore the requirements in any of the post-secondary institutions that offer computer training.

Harmony, a grade 11 student, was definitely postponing any definite plans for an occupational choice mainly because she had at least three more semesters in which to decide. She had almost rejected a long-time aspiration towards being a veterinarian because of a clash with personal needs, but really was not moving towards any other choice.

Conflict of Priorities

Two of the cases were experiencing a conflict of priorities which was interacting with the occupational choice process. For each participant a conflict was partially resolved through the dialogue of the research process.

During the initial interview Hans spoke of work preferences that seemed to hint at an interest in the world of business. He said he wished to work in an established business and that money was a high priority. Then he identified an occupational interest in the occupation of youth pastor. Through questioning he was challenged to explore self and to set priorities in work preferences. Eventually he spoke of satisfying those priorities which might not be served in business, through his personal life endeavors.

Harmony experienced conflict in her preferences of life style and those demanded of her first choice of occupation--a veterinarian. She wanted to take part in the veterinarian work education, she stated. Since that station was not available, she chose a day-care centre instead, acknowledging her love of children.

During the final follow-up interview she acknowledged that she was moving away from the occupation of veterinarian because of the conflict between the demands and her own strong personal priorities of having a family early in life and staying at home with he children when they are small. She spoke of the dialogue process of the research,

> Yeah, sometimes you just need to say what's in your head otherwise you don't even know it's there and talking to you helped me to find out what I really think.

Cochran, and Giza (1986) studied conflict in the career decision schemes of high aspiration youth. Their sample consisted of tenth and eleventh graders in a Western Canadian high school. For males the five most conflicting relations involved the following: challenge and time; freedom and security; salary and talents; and advancement and time. For females the most conflicting relations involved challenge and time; challenge and security; freedom and security. Time did not permit me in the study herein reported to pursue the element of conflict. The focus of the study was to examine meanings at the work station, however outside influences are reported simply because the participants voluntarily spoke of them without any direct questioning.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS

Dialogue

The strongest implication for all the meanings ascribed to the experiences at the work station as well as outside influences appears to be the quality and frequency of reciprocal communication. Meanings can be mediated by various forms of communication: written, facial expressions, as well as verbal interaction.

Meanings of experience reported by the participants with satisfaction were supported through instances of various forms of communication, mainly verbal. For example, being an "insider" was a meaning perceived by Elvis through a particular verbal communication from the owner of the business. She told him she could trust him to take care of the store on his own while she went out.

The nature of the communication as well as the frequency mediates the meanings. Although Elvis perceived an experience in selling outside the office as a "Drowning in the Deep End" initially, he eventually looked upon it as an achievement experience. It is possible that the frequency of positive verbal interaction with personnel at the work station was related to his change in perception.

Some students, like Elvis, initiate the dialogue and eventually remove the barrier to learning by receiving more help. Others like Maria remain silent and suffer the consequences of confusion and feelings of lack of achievement. Perhaps more time spent in group and individual interviews with these participants by school personnel would mediate the meanings of lack of dialogue at the workplace.

A salient implication herein may be that we, as educators ask ourselves how we can ensure that the level of two-way communication at the work station is optimum for the student involved. Furthermore, I believe the data is challenging us to ask ourselves what we can do to raise the awareness of parents and administrators of the need for adequate time to spend with both students and work station personnel to enhance the learning that is taking place.

Time

The implication of communication goes hand in hand with taking time with work education students. A few references were made by students to the element of time in the perceptions of meanings. They needed time as well as dialogue to come to an understanding of the experiences. Some of the students also referred to the group interview as a way of feeling part of a group in work experience. Since there is no allotted class time to work education, often individual students do not realize who else might have similar experiences. In school classes these students could talk to each other and get help from each other. One student spoke of how the group interview I held had helped him to feel brave enough to talk to two of the students participating and who were in his other classes.

At the work station, student and work station personnel dissatisfactions seemed to occur in situations where an inadequate amount of time was spent in communicating with the student. The implication seems once more, to be, one of allowing for time for two-way dialogue with the work education coordinator as well as scheduled classroom time whereby the students can identify with other students in the program.

Different Strokes for Different Folks

The hidden meaning for at least two of the students at the work station seemed to be,

> Any student who participates in work education here needs to fill the role as defined by the work station. The work station is not obliged to

> adapt the role to the student's capabilities and interests; rather the student is obliged to fit his or herself into the role requirements.

The expectations of the role, were not adequately explicated according to some participants. In Elvis' case he finally came to the realization that he was being asked to engage in activities beyond his reach simply because the student before had been able to complete that level of activity. Maria never did realize that she was not being helped as much as she would have enjoyed simply because the work education student before her had not needed any more assistance. It was taken for granted by the work station that she would fill that role in the same way as the student before her. According to both Maria and Anna, the supervisor, no checking on her work or whether she actually understood what was required was taking place. Anna stated that it was not necessary; of course she expected the school to make sure that the student was capable of filling the role--she did not have the time.

Paying attention to the background and needs of each student individually in order to determine level of training needed for the activities assigned seems to be in order at the work station. In a group interview Elvis noted that Hans had also had an experience of great responsibility early into the experience. However, for Elvis that kind of activity had been perceived as a "drowning" experience; for Hans it had been perceived as a "learning in the driver's seat" and "achievement" experience.

Erring on the side of higher expectations than the student's capabilities was not the only element of incongruence between student and work station expectations. Harmony was not given responsibilities that she was ready for simply because of a full staffing situation and no need for these responsibilities to be fulfilled by a work education student. Once again, the student was expected to fill the role expectations as they were at the time without any consideration to what she herself wanted or was capable of.

Coping with Surprises

Two participants needed to have someone "alongside" to help them cope with an unforeseen circumstance in the work station. Maria had to deal with increased isolation from her supervisor due to a short-staffing situation as well having to share the supervisor's time with another student from a college doing his practicum at the work station. The fact that she was not coping on her own adequately, was evidenced by her expressed intention during the second research interview to quit the work education.

Lyndel was told by the administrator at the work station that her hours were being cut, and that another work education student would take those hours. She was shocked by this change and did not really understand why it had been imposed. She was afraid to ask the administrator. Although I did encourage her on the phone to go to the administrator, I did not arrange to talk to her about it in person. She eventually terminated the experience, getting only three credits instead of five because of the reduced time at the work station. This circumstance was made all the more dramatic since Lyndel had been so pleased with the experience up to the point of a change in her hours. She admitted that she found it difficult to talk to Mrs. Rajah, the administrator, who always seemed to be in a hurry.

When there is a lack or a break in communication at the work station, it appears that the student needs time with a work experience coordinator for a two-way dialogue in order to learn coping skills. Under the present time allotment given to the average work experience coordinator in Adelaide, it is not too likely that there would be adequate time for just such a dialogue.

Research Process as Dialogue

The research design called for three interviews with each participant as well as an observation with some dialogue as well. Furthermore, a follow-up telephone interview was conducted. The dialogue that research participants engaged in was reported by them as very beneficial in mediating the meanings of the work station experiences.

Of particular note was Hans' declaration that he learned far more about how to explore self and others and match those attributes to an occupation through the thought-provoking questions of the researcher than through any other experience. Without any direct questioning, he wanted to go on record as having recommended that a similar intervention be available to all high school students taking part in work education.

Various statements made by the participants alluded to the effect of the research process of dialogue in aiding their perceptions. Elvis said, "now that you're saying that . . . yes, I am beginning to see what's really happening" when we were speaking of how one supervisor wanted him to sell while passing off the responsibility for teaching how to sell to the owner. Harmony talked about being able to "talk about what's in my head" as helpful in coming to a realization of her preferences and her abilities.

Follow-up Interview with Participants

Students and work station personnel were asked to provide their suggestions for the work education program. All participants were contacted. One supervisor, two coordinators and all five participant students cooperated in providing the suggestions herein reported.

Suggestions from Employers for Work Education

1. The school should provide more comprehensive screening of students, including vocational counselling as part of the selection process.
2. More time should be allotted to the work experience coordinator to visit the work station and aid in the learning that takes place there.
3. There should be midterm evaluations of students to allow for a basis for improvement towards a final evaluation.

4. Should spend a longer period of time in the work station: two semesters or two rounds of 125 rounds rather than one, especially if the aim is occupational exploration.

5. Students should come to the initial work station interview prepared with a written or typed statement of his or her educational background, strengths and weaknesses, along with clear expectations of his or her role while in the work station. One supervisor stated that a prepared resume, requiring some thought on the part of the student, might avoid misconceptions and lack of congruity between student and work station expectations.

Suggestions from Students for the School

1. Provide more publicity about the program. Make it more high profile so that students would see value other than credits in taking it. Have a work education awareness day, with work station supervisors and work education participants as speakers. This special day is perceived as something like the present "career day." Work education day ideally would occur every year before the end of the year when students decide their programs for the next year.

2. Allow the work experience coordinator more time to spend in one-to-one interviews, both for vocational counselling and for information about the work stations.

3. Provide for classroom time so that all participants can get together and discuss experiences.

4. Make reports available on each work station, when students are deciding where they wish to engage in work education. These reports would be a composite of student and work experience coordinator observations and experiences at each station. Each student should fill out an evaluation report on each work station and hand it in as part of his or her requirements for the credits. One student thought it would be ideal to have a final interview with each student as part of the evaluation of the work station, but then realized it might be impractical in terms of time.

5. Make work education compulsory at some time in the high school program for a minimum of three credits and taken in conjunction with a stated vocational choice.

Suggestions from Students for Work Station

1. Have the interview directly with the person with whom the student will be working (supervisor) instead of the administrator, or perhaps with both people.

2. The supervisor should provide more communication to the student to aid him or her to become an "insider." Students expressed a reluctance to "do time" in the station before the individual is accepted as a "team player."

3. Ensure more help "alongside," especially in the orientation to a new situation and new tasks. In two businesses two students experienced rushed instructions and being left to work things out on their own before they were really familiar with the work.

Student Concern for Raising the Profile of the Program

Of particular significance is the eagerness with which students responded to the question, "What is the difference between school-based learning and work education?" As educators I believe their unqualified vote for the program as something quite different from "just credits" gives us pause to reflect on our involvement in bringing work education to the consciousness of all our young people. Some of the students expressed concern about the lack of publicity of the program within the school system and the lack of awareness their friends had of just what work education could do for them. If students are concerned, I wonder is that a clear message to administrators and teachers to answer that concern?

CHAPTER VII

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

I had not resumed my studies at the university, after a twenty-year absence, for the express purpose of earning another degree. What I really wanted to do was to learn more about how I might be able to help individuals in their career development process.

Reluctance in asking strangers to donate large blocks of time to the research, not to mention intrusion of their privacy, was problematic to me. To get around this barrier, I determined to offer students help in their career development if they desired it. Two students availed themselves of this opportunity. By interacting with them outside the research process, I perceived a repayment of at least part my indebtedness to them.

All students told me that they had benefited from taking part in the research simply because of the dialogue made possible through the interviews. Feedback reports of usefulness to students gave purpose to my study. Expressed interest in the results by the work experience coordinator, the school board consultant, and later by the Department of Education representatives renewed my sense of direction.

My research activities have also been a career exploration for me. The process of studying student informants reaffirmed my tentative choice of working in an area of endeavor that would permit me to help someone alongside in their progress on a career pathway.

Students referred to the appreciation of being able to work alongside a supervisor at the station. Learning tasks through the modeling of a supervisor, and engaging in activities normally performed by paid employees was a source of satisfaction to them. As I began thinking about this reference to alongside learning, I began to relate it to the problems I sometimes had in getting answers to my questions as an interviewer. Eventually, I realized that I needed to adopt the alongside stance in my interviewing and observing activities in order to help informants to express themselves more freely.

During the participant-observation and the third set of interviews, I made a concentrated effort at changing my stance. The idea I wanted to get across is that we were in this process together and that I was learning through their eyes, but also I needed to come closer to their life-world. One example of this was simply to share my own experiences in part-time work and also business life. I was surprised at the difference it made. Perhaps it was difficult for them to relate to me as a graduate student or as a researcher; but to a waitress, typist, or even a business owner they had something to say. Only at the end of this research have I realized how much the dialogue changed once I opened a new window on myself to each of the cases.

When referring to school-based classes they spoke distastefully of imposed learning. There was no feeling of reciprocity between the instructor and the student. The student had no "say": no choice in the matter. Most importantly his or her human dignity was at stake. Students continually spoke glowingly of a supervisor at the work station who did not make them "feel stupid", and disparagingly of those instances where they "felt dumb."

In my follow-up interviews, I decided to spend time letting the students know how much their participation meant to me as well as to those who read and discover the participants' meanings of work education. I asked them to give me their ideas on what changes they would like to see in the work education program whether at the school level or at the work station. I noted how each of the individuals were happy to oblige. I wondered how often educators recognize the dignity of their students by providing them an opportunity to share the meaning of experiences in their life-world.

Different university classes and professors flashed before me. All the classes that I took since I resumed my education were beneficial to my research in some way; some were interesting as well. Why is it, I reflected, that I remember more vividly those classes where the professor, and perhaps some of the students as well, accorded me the human dignity of all my past experiences as well as my present ones.

As I reflected on my journey throughout the preparation and the actual study itself, I realized that my advisor had been very much alongside for me. On occasion I have shared the pain and frustration of other graduate students who experienced a sense of isolation from their advisors. How fortunate I find myself in being able to complete this thesis, knowing my advisor was alongside, ready to listen and to guide me. Through his counsel I experienced an over-riding sense of dignity. My participation in this study has brought me to a new awareness of a cry for the recognition of the dignity of a human being.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATION ON RESEARCH PROJECT IN WORK EXPERIENCE CHAMPION HIGH SCHOOL

****

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. The research that I will be conducting with work experience students is the final requirement of my graduate program towards a Master's Degree in Education with a major emphasis on Vocational Guidance. This research has been approved by the University Ethics Committee and both the Principal, Mr. R. G. Simpson, and the Work Experience Coordinator, Mrs. B. Durant have agreed to participate.

The questionnaire which is attached asks you to indicate whether you would be interested in taking part in this study. Even after you have consented to participate you may drop out at any time if you so desire. A letter will be provided for your parents along with a consent form to sign and return. Your workplace supervisor will also be given a letter and consent form to sign and return. We must have all these consents before we can begin.

Some of you may be needed for the original interview only. Others will be asked to continue for a few more interviews (in the school at your convenience, possibly noon hour or a spare period). ALL INTERVIEWS WILL BE CONDUCTED WITH STRICTEST REGARD TO CONFIDENTIALITY. Although the material gleaned will be used for the thesis, all names and places and situations will be given fictitious names in order to protect participants' anonymity.

The focus of this research is the process of vocational choice as it is impacted by the work experience at the work station. You as a student participant may find that you gain a better appreciation of the vocational choice process and be helped toward an occupational choice. The final result will be a bound thesis (book form) that will be on file at the University of Alberta. Various sections of the research may be written up for the information of other schools and/or parents.

AT LEAST ONE OF YOUR OBJECTIVES IN TAKING WORK EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE EXPLORING YOUR OWN VOCATIONAL CHOICES if you wish to be a participant in this research. Please answer all the questions attached and return to me. Mrs. Durant or I will be contacting you regarding the first interview, as well as the letter to parents and workstation supervisor. I NEED TO INTERVIEW YOU ONCE BEFORE YOU ACTUALLY START PARTICIPATING AT THE WORK STATION.

Thank you so much for your cooperation in this venture. I pledge to endeavor to make it beneficial to all participants.

Mrs. S. Catherine (Cathy) Humeniuk
Graduate Student, University of Alberta

APPENDIX B

WORK EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME________________________________ GRADE ______ If 2nd year of Gr. 12 please indicate

RESIDENCE PHONE NUMBER ____________ HOME ROOM NO. ____

RESIDENCE ADDRESS WITH POSTAL CODE ____________________

PARENTS' NAMES (FATHER AND MOTHER OR LEGAL GUARDIANS

____

WORK EXPERIENCE LEVEL YOU WILL BE WORKING AT THIS SEMESTER

(A) 15 _____ (B) 25 _____ (C) 35 _____

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN W E 15, PLEASE STATE YOUR POSITION, THE NAME OF YOUR COOPERATING FIRM AND DATE YOU COMPLETED.

____

____

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY TAKEN W E 25, PLEASE STATE YOUR POSITION, THE NAME OF YOUR COOPERATING FIRM AND DATE YOU COMPLETED.

____

____

PLEASE LIST ALL PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT BELOW IN ORDER OF OCCURRENCE

DATE FROM	TO	POSITION HELD	EMPLOYER CO. NAME

IN WHAT OCCUPATION DO YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE AS PART OF YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE?

____

WHY? ____

WORK EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE PAGE TWO

PLEASE LIST ALL THE SUBJECTS IN WHICH YOU ARE ENROLLED THIS SEMESTER:

PERIOD ONE	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD TWO	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD THREE	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD FOUR	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD FIVE	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD SIX	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD SEVEN	TEACHER	ROOM NO.
PERIOD EIGHT	TEACHER	ROOM NO.

YOUR LONGTERM GOAL IN TAKING THESE SUBJECTS IS BEST DESCRIBED AS: (CHOOSE ONE)

(A) UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE (B) JUNIOR COLLEGE ENTRANCE

(C) TRADE SCHOOL ENTRANCE (Adelaide Institute of Technology or similar)

(D) DIRECT ENTRANCE TO EMPLOYMENT UPON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

(E) OTHER (PLEASE EXPLAIN)

IN A SHORT PARAGRAPH EXPLAIN YOUR REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN WORK EXPERIENCE, DEMONSTRATING WHAT YOU WISH TO ACHIEVE BY PARTICIPATING IN THIS COURSE.

WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT JUST OUTLINED TO YOU BY MRS. HUMENIUK AND OUTLINED ON THE NEXT PAGE? YES_____ NO _____

IF YES, EXPLAIN WHY. ______________________________

____

____

I DO AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT.

____
Student Signature

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

September 20, 1989

Parent Name
Address

Dear Parent:

Your son Elvis has agreed to take part in a research project on the work experience program in which he is enrolled.

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. Because of my interest in and belief in the value of the work experience program to high school students, I have chosen to do research in this area. I hereby request your permission to work with Elvis for the purpose of my research project. Please sign this letter and have Elvis return one copy to me as soon as possible.

I hope that the students will be encouraged to explore their vocational choices more thoroughly as a result of participating in this research project. My focus is on the impact of work experience on vocational choice. My research proposal has been approved by the University of Alberta. I also have permission to conduct this research from the Sample Public School Board as well as the principal of Champion High School and the Work Experience Coordinator, Mrs. B. Durant.

If you have questions regarding this project, please call me at 444-6030. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mrs. S. Catherine Humeniuk
Graduate Student

PARENTAL DECLARATION

I understand that the researcher pledges to respect the confidentiality of all information gathered and that all participants will remain anonymous.

I also realize that Elvis has the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

I hereby give my permission for Elvis to take part in the work experience research.

Parental Signature

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO WORK STATION ADMINISTRATOR

September 30, 1989

Ms. M. Middleton, Manager
The Next-to-New Computer Company
2314 - 12 Avenue
Adelaide

Dear Ms. Middleton:

RE: ELVIS BROWN

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta. Because of my interest in and belief in the value of the work experience program to high school students, I have chosen to do research in this area. I hereby request your permission to work with Elvis Brown through a few observations and a few interviews with his supervisors for the purpose of gathering data for my research project. My focus is finding out how the experience in the work station is impacting the student's vocational choice.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please call me at 444-6030. Please sign one copy of this letter and return it to me in the enclosed stamped envelope as soon as possible.

My research proposal has been approved by the University of Alberta and I have permission to conduct the research through Champion High School from the Sample Public School Board as well as the principal, Mr. R. G. Simpson, and the Work Experience Coordinator, Mrs. B. Durant.

Sincerely,

Mrs. S. Catherine Humeniuk
Graduate Student

WORK STATION DECLARATION

I understand that the researcher pledges to respect the confidentiality of all information gathered and that all participants will remain anonymous.

I further understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time.

I hereby give my permission for Mrs. S.C. Humeniuk to conduct her research with the above-named student while he participates in work experience at our work station.

____
Work Station Administrator

APPENDIX E

GUIDE FOR SECOND SET OF STUDENT INTERVIEWS

1. Ask questions that remain puzzling from the first interview.

2. Describe a typical day at the work station, what you do and with whom.

3. What are your favorite activities at the work station?

4. Is there anything you do not like about your experience at the work station?

5. If you were the supervisor with a work experience student what would you do different than what your supervisor is doing?

6. What is your happiest day on the job so far?

APPENDIX F

SELECTED NARRATION FROM SAMPLE SECOND INTERVIEW

R. Would you describe a typical day on the job listing activities and with whom you are involved?

S. If it's Monday, I go in at noon, sometimes there will be a surgery to see. I get ready, put on a gown and a cap like a little mask. You have to make sure you're clean. After surgery, I'll clean up the surgery room, sterilize everything, was instruments. If there is no surgery that day, I will go in and see what animals are in the back. If Mabel has any chores for me to do, I do them, like putting baby powder in the gloves and put in sterilizer machine. If there's instruments to be scrubbed and sterilized and put into packs. Lot of times she'll come to check if they're right. Any cleaning to be done, like cages and check on animals and walk the dogs and make sure examination rooms are clean and make sure the thermometers are in solution, fill up with solution. Pets that are boarding, do a preboard on them, check temperature, check weight, have to hold animals really secure so they can't bite, really hug them, oh!!! So many interesting things, each day is totally different. If there's stuff to be ordered, Mabel will write up the list and I will phone and order. Some of the items are hard to pronounce, but it's getting easier as I get to do it more.

R. The lady you work with, Mabel, is she the one that directs you in what you should do?

S. She usually writes up a list for me to do as she thinks of stuff to be done. She's always keeping me hopping.

R. Do you like that?

S. Well, the time goes a lot faster. So, there's not much time to spare, really. Mabel always appreciates, she always says, "thank you" and how much she appreciates it. A lot of things she can't get done unless the little things are done. I prepare fecals, like when they prepare the stool samples from their pets, in liquid, and what not and it's quite interesting and if they have a positive, or under the microscope, they find it has worms, she'll show me, so I know what that type of worm looks like and what not.

R. Do you ever interact with Mrs. Rajah?

S. Mrs. Rajah is always so busy, paper work and stuff, I don't really see too much of her. Sometimes she'll come and tell me to do something like filing or something. I do a lot of filing too during the day. It depends on how busy I am. If I have nothing else to do, I'll go up to the front and see if the receptionist needs some help with the filing. A lot of times it just builds up, after a patient comes in, you have to put the files away. But she get so busy that she gets a big stack by the end of the day and if I leave before her, she's stuck with a lot of work, so if I have nothing to do I'll go up there. One day I helped with phoning old files and called the people, to tell them that their pet is overdue for vaccinations.

R. What on the job activities do you enjoy most?

S. I like working with the animals, like when the vet brings the animal back there, like preboard.

R. Actual "hands-on" experience with the animals, would you say?

S. Yes, I like that and knowing that you're helping the vet. The cleaning part is not bad, but it's not the best part of the job. I like working with animals, most of all. I don't mind the filing part, too.

R. Basically, the interaction with the animals, that's what you like most?

S. Yes.

R. Let's talk about interacting with people.

S. Well any place you go you'll find people you like and act fairly well. Well, if Mabel wasn't there, I think I'd find it quite hard. With the other receptionist, she didn't talk much, Mabel laughs all the time and she is telling me stories and makes time go by so fast. You feel more confident and comfortable around her when somebody's joking. She doesn't get snotty even when she's on her lunch break and I ask Mabel where is this solution. She doesn't get mad, I've never seen her in a bad mood, always willing to help.

R. You enjoy being able to work with Mabel?

S. Well, if she wanted, she could hold the animals all the time, but she doesn't. She always finds herself something to do, so that the vets ask me to do it. She helps me quite a lot. I find Mabel good to work with.

R. Can you see yourself in Mabel's position a few years down the road?

S. Yes. I enjoy it. They make it like you, the vets really make me feel at home, they don't look down at me. Like you're just a kid. I think they appreciate me there, too. Knowing that makes it a lot easier and you feel better about yourself.

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE ANALYSIS OF MEANING UNITS

Meaning Unit (Student Narration)

ANALYTIC UNIT (RESEARCHER'S REDUCTION)

Oh, yeah, I'm inside, but I feel I'm outside. I don't really understand all those files. They're giving me all these sheets of paper and also the typing. I don't understand where they all fit.

STUDENT IS EXPERIENCING A LACK OF CONNECTEDNESS IN HER ACTIVITIES AND AS A RESULT DOES NOT CONSIDER HERSELF AN "INSIDER".

Yes, very confused.

SHE FEELS CONFUSED.

If I was the supervisor, I wouldn't let that girl be stuck in that little room. I'd let her see something else, see the big picture, what travel agents are all about and also help other clients, just be there. I wouldn't let that girl be stuck, doing filing; mostly in that room.

STUDENT LONGS TO EXPERIENCE THE ENTIRE OPERATION OF THE BUSINESS, TO BE INVOLVED THE WAY OTHER EMPLOYEES ARE IN THE FRONT OFFICE.

I'd like that. I'd like to see what she's doing. Also to be a part of her. It would help give me more information. I'm not really seeing the correct picture.

**SHE WOULD LIKE TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN WHAT HER SUPERVISOR IS DOING IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE WHOLE PICTURE OF THE TRAVEL AGENCY'S OPERATIONS.
(CODE: INCONGRUENCY OF EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL THE ABOVE)**

No, I haven't seen clients and how a booking is made. There's a new girl there. They don't want to focus on me, rather they have to focus on her. Because she is going to be the next consultant and she has to learn everything. That's where the problem lies. One girl is leaving, so she has to take her place.

MARIA'S VIEW IS THAT SHE IS NOT INVOLVED IN THE ACTUAL TRAVEL CONSULTANT'S ACTIVITIES BECAUSE A NEW CONSULTANT IS BEING TRAINED.

I expected travel consultant to be person very busy but has time for client and experiencing client's view of where they want to go.

Sure they do work with computers. There is a lot of work to do. Something with tickets. A lot of work. Paper work. Once a client comes in, they have to set aside and talk with client. Pressure. Jean had to travel to Bermuda but she's not finished with paper work so cancelled trip, can you imagine! And, also they don't have much time for leisure. Jean was supposed to be off at 5 but not till 9. When she comes home she is so tired that she just sleeps and wait till next morning to go back to work. uugh!

SHE IS EXPERIENCING SOME DISILLUSIONMENT IN COMPARING WHAT A TRAVEL CONSULTANT DOES WITH WHAT SHE EXPECTED. (CODE: THE BUBBLE BURSTS)

If I was the supervisor, I wouldn't let that girl be stuck in that little room. I'd let her do something else, see the big picture, what travel agents are all about and also I would let her help clients, just be there. Maybe clients feel intimidated. 'She's busy right now, but can I give you some brochures to look at?' I wouldn't let that girl be stuck, doing filing. Mostly I am staying in that back room.

MARIA DESIRES TO BE INVOLVED WITH CLIENTS IN THE FRONT OFFICE INSTEAD OF FILING IN THE BACK ROOM. (CODE: INCONGRUENCY OF ROLE EXPECTATION)

The happiest day? It has to be that supper with Jean at her house. All the employees were there except for Anna who was on vacation. They were talking about clients, what they like, what they don't like, the positives and negatives about the job, like wages. Mostly they put the job out of their minds and talked about something else, like fashion and movies. I really felt special, being invited. I did tell Jean that I enjoyed myself.

MARIA DESCRIBES THE HAPPIEST DAY ACTUALLY AWAY FROM THE WORK STATION BUT ACCEPTED AS ONE OF THE EMPLOYEES IN A SOCIAL SITUATION WITH THEM. (CODE: INSIDER)

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE FOLLOWUP LETTER SENT TO WORK STATION

March 31, 1989

Mrs. A. Rajah
Administrator
Lansdown Animal Clinic
1323 - 154 Street
Adelaide

Dear Mrs. Rajah:

RE: PARTICIPATION IN WORK EXPERIENCE RESEARCH

One month ago I finished collecting all the data for my research in the meaning of work experience to the high school participant. After a scheduled break, I am now in the process of analyzing the material for use in my thesis. My advisor at the University of Alberta has helped me to decide on a focus for the final product.

I am very grateful to you, first of all for allowing me access to your place of business to observe the student first hand; and secondly for giving me time to interview you as well. Although I have completed all the interviews as required by my original research design, it is expected that as I write, there will still be a question or two that requires an answer. I hope that you will allow me to contact you by telephone just to clarify some of the data that is still puzzling.

Please pass on my warmest appreciation to the other personnel involved with Lyndel. Thank you so much for allowing me to gain insight into the meaning of work experience through the eyes of Lyndel Black.

Sincerely,

Mrs. S. C. Humeniuk
Graduate Student

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE FOLLOWUP LETTER TO STUDENTS

March 31, 1989

Miss Harmony Block
4456-3rd Avenue
Adelaide

Dear Harmony:

Just recently I finished collecting all the data for my research and am in the process of analyzing it for use in my thesis. My advisor at the University of Alberta has helped me to decide on a focus for the final product.

I am deeply grateful to you, Harmony, for the time that you spent with me on the project and the wonderful cooperative attitude that you displayed in answering all my questions. Although I have completed all the interviews, it is expected that as I write, there will still be a few questions that I need to clarify. I hope that you will allow me to contact you by telephone just to answer a few questions or confirm any of the material.

Please pass on my warmest appreciation to your parents for allowing me to involve you in this research. It is my sincere hope that you have benefited in some way through the participation in this work experience project.

Thank you so much for allowing me to gain an insight of the meaning of work experience through your eyes.

Sincerely,

Mrs. S. C. Humeniuk
Graduate Student